That Was The Year That Was

The stars reveal their 2019 highs and lows

Starring a Q Award-winning cast:

Lewis Capaldi Christine The 1975 Stormzy
Foals Michael Kiwanuka Kano Madness
Kim Gordon Jarvis Cocker Anna Calvi Tricky
Bobby Gillespie Edwyn Collins Little Simz

And more...

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Plus: Interview Frenzy!

Pete Townshend
"I was 17 and ready to die"

Green Day
"You can't help but think of Trump"
New album incoming

The Chemical Brothers
"Danny DeVito is a bit of a raver"

BECK

HYPERSPACE

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THE NEW ALBUM 22 NOVEMBER

Virgin RECORDS

January 2020

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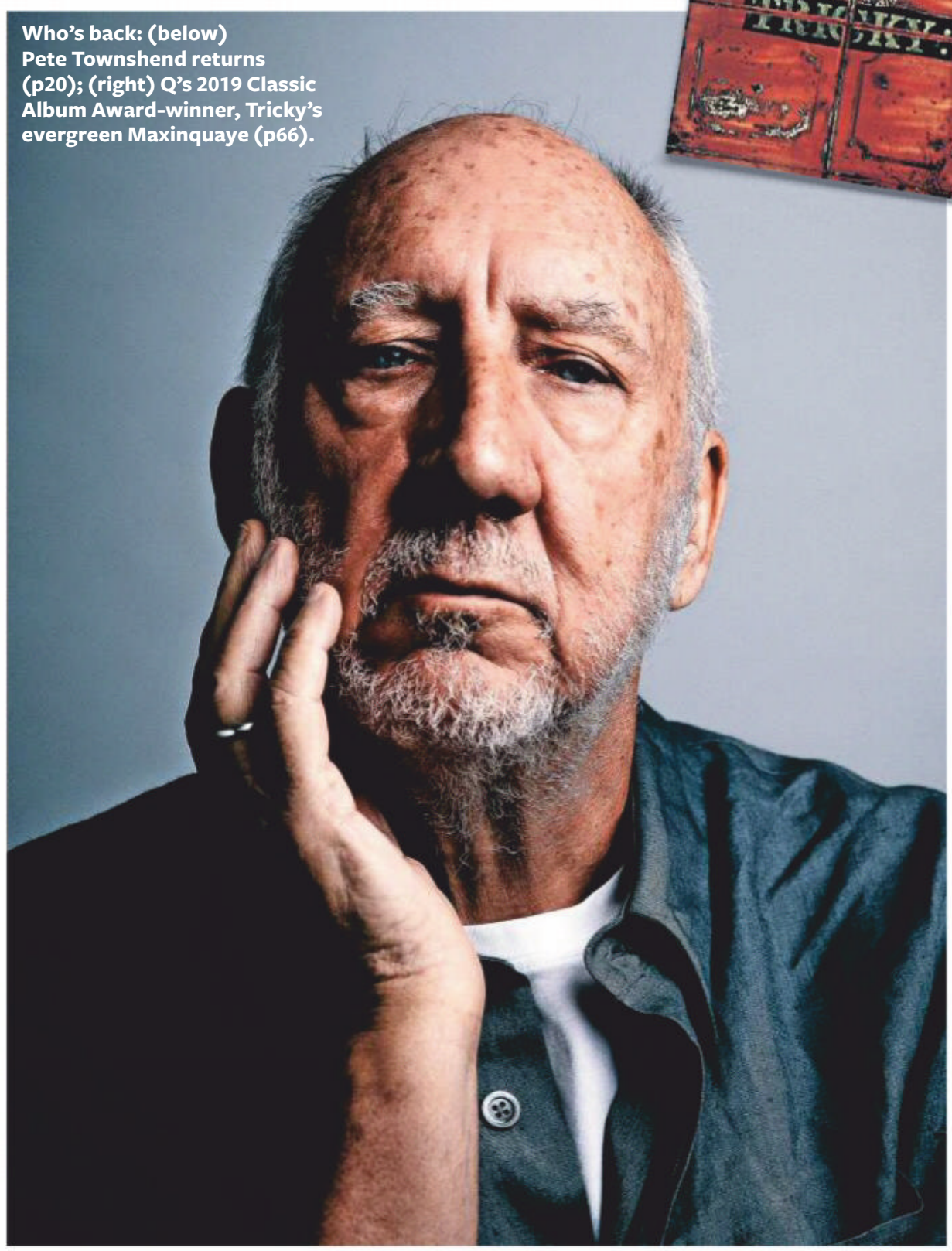
This month's highlight: enjoying Nadine Shah's impeccable presenting skills at the Q Awards.

Who's back: (below) Pete Townshend returns (p20); (right) Q's 2019 Classic Album Award-winner, Tricky's evergreen Maxinquaye (p66).



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COVER: ALEX LAKE. THIS PAGE: MICHAEL CLEMENT

Backstage...

Happy old year: Q Editor Ted Kessler kicks things off at the Roundhouse.

Giving out prizes to musicians for their work is silly. Music is not a competition. Besides, there are already weekly charts that detail commercial successes, reviews that contextualise recordings, audiences who cheer artists when they appear onstage. And yet...

The Q Awards is reliably the warmest, most satisfying night of the year. That's because the gongs handed out are less rewards for winners and more about recognition for how intrinsically certain musicians have designed our universe, how the art they've created has affected all of us. It's a chance for us, the readers and staff, to say thank you.

The winning margins in the reader-voted categories at this year's awards were very small and the shortlists were longer than previously because there was so little to separate them all. So, in many ways, everyone shortlisted is a winner. That's how I sold it to myself, anyway. It makes me feel better when I see the pain on the faces of those whose name is not called to come to the podium.

And this year, through luck or design (let's call it design), there was a comradery between the legacy award winners that brought tears to the eye. Tricky, for example, standing in the entrance hugging everyone as they arrived. Oh, it's Suggs! Hey, Bobby G... Jarvis! Text me! Kim Gordon: you haven't aged at all, have you, girl...

At the back of the room Madness held court with Kevin Rowland and Tim Burgess, ruffling hair and feathers. Kano and Dizzee Rascal were locked in conference in the photo room, catching up on long-lost mutual friends. Stormzy and Nadine Shah gossiped outside in the smoking area, like two old neighbours chatting over the fence. And Matty Healy very politely asked if it was OK if he told Bobby Gillespie how much he loved Primal Scream... All were united by their musical history.

Often, after award ceremonies, stars zoom off to their private, roped-off worlds. Not at the Q Awards 2019. Rose McGowan, of Hollywood and international superstar repute, took everyone to a pub on Camden High Street, stood her round and held up the bar until the bell. Out on the pavement, McGowan, Tricky, Foals and Lewis Capaldi consulted phones, searching for one final celebratory round. Kevin Rowland, sober and clad in a pink zoot suit, set off with a jaunty skip towards the last Tube...

And back inside the pub, person unknown picked up the editor's lovely black raincoat, tucked it under their arm and exited stage left. But you can't win them all.

I hope you enjoy all the interviews with the winners and presenters, along with the rest of the issue.

Ted Kessler, Editor, Q Magazine.

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[...And who they'd give an award to...]

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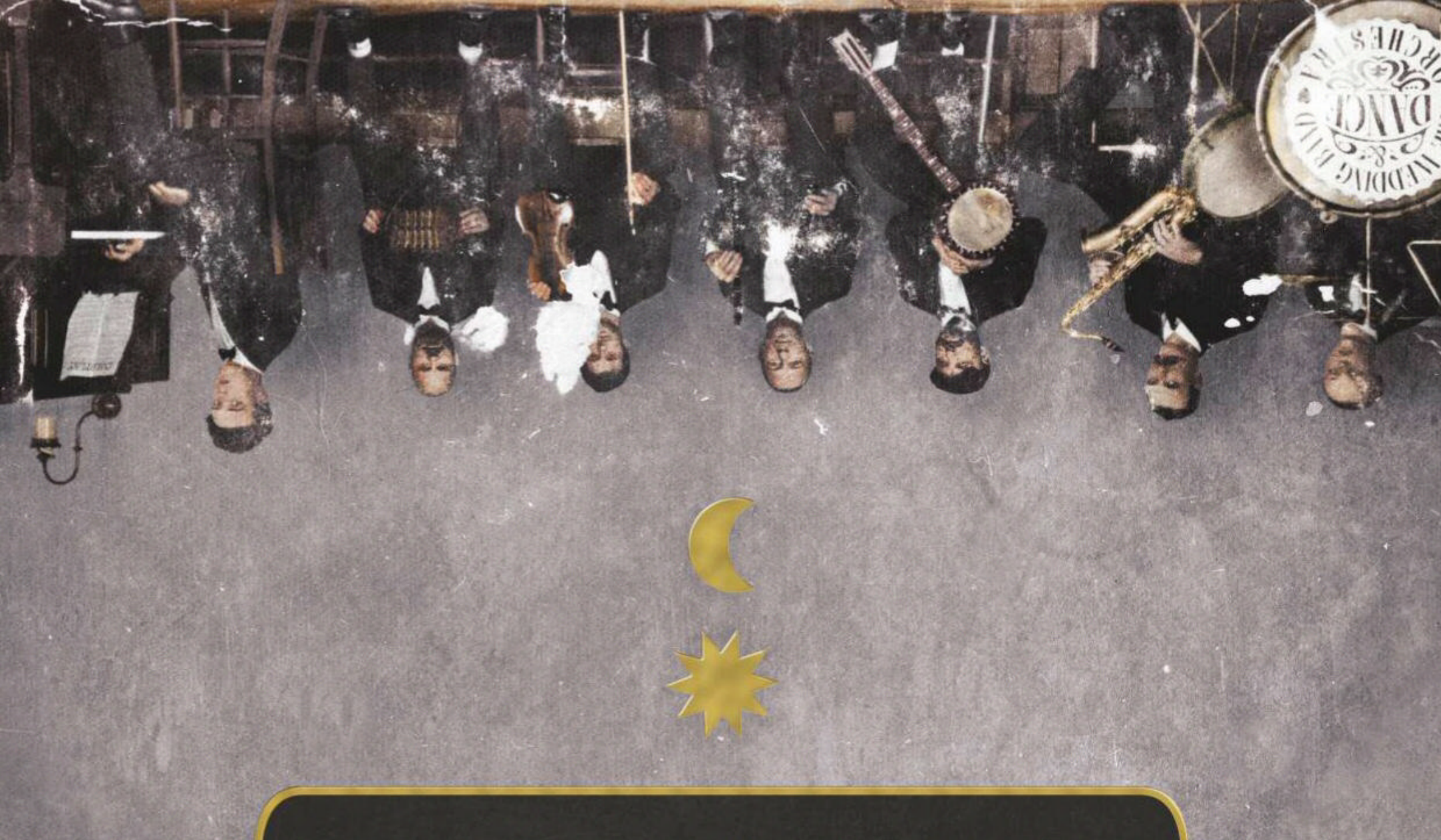
MARCO VITTUR



November 22

COLDPLAY

EVERYDAY LIFE

سلام وحب

Parlophone

INCOMING

NEW ADVENTURES IN MUSIC...

In which we get an update from Sam Fender's tourbus, break bread with James Blunt and hear the new Courteeners album.

First Look

GREEN DAY'S DIRECT HITS

Punk trio's short, sharp party record for the end times.

Green Day singer Billie Joe Armstrong would like to clear up any ambiguity around the name of his band's new album. The title, as it appears on the artwork, is Father Of All..., but Armstrong is definitive on what that ellipsis represents. "The actual title is Father Of All Motherfuckers," says the 47 year old. "But according to the rules of censorship, it's the Father Of All dot-dot-dot."

When it comes to who exactly the titular Father is, Armstrong isn't so unequivocal. "Well, you can't help but think about Donald Trump," he says. "But, then, maybe it's me. Maybe *I'm* the father of all motherfuckers. A little bit of chest-beating there."

Irrespective of whether it's a dig at the man in the White House or not, the US trio's 13th album, out in February, is a barely contained explosion of riotous energy. Taking the opposite tack to their epic 2004 punk rock opera American Idiot, it serves up 10 tracks in 26 breathless minutes. It's a rock'n'roll dance party, 2020-style.

"I'm bored of long songs," says Armstrong, the man who once wrote a nine-minute pop-punk blowout called Jesus Of Suburbia. "Honestly, now if I'm scrolling through songs, I'll come across something that's, like, four minutes, and I'll go, 'I'm not actually gonna listen to that.' My attention span is gone."

"When you masturbate, do you take your time and lube up?" adds drummer Tré Cool. "Or do you want to get it out there and just squirt? We're squirting."

This ADHD approach sees Father Of All Motherfuckers playing out like a pocket history of rock'n'roll, pinballing gleefully between styles and influences during its horsefly-like duration. "It's definitely a rock'n'roll record," says Armstrong. "But we've incorporated a lot of different things: glam rock, Motown, soul and R&B."

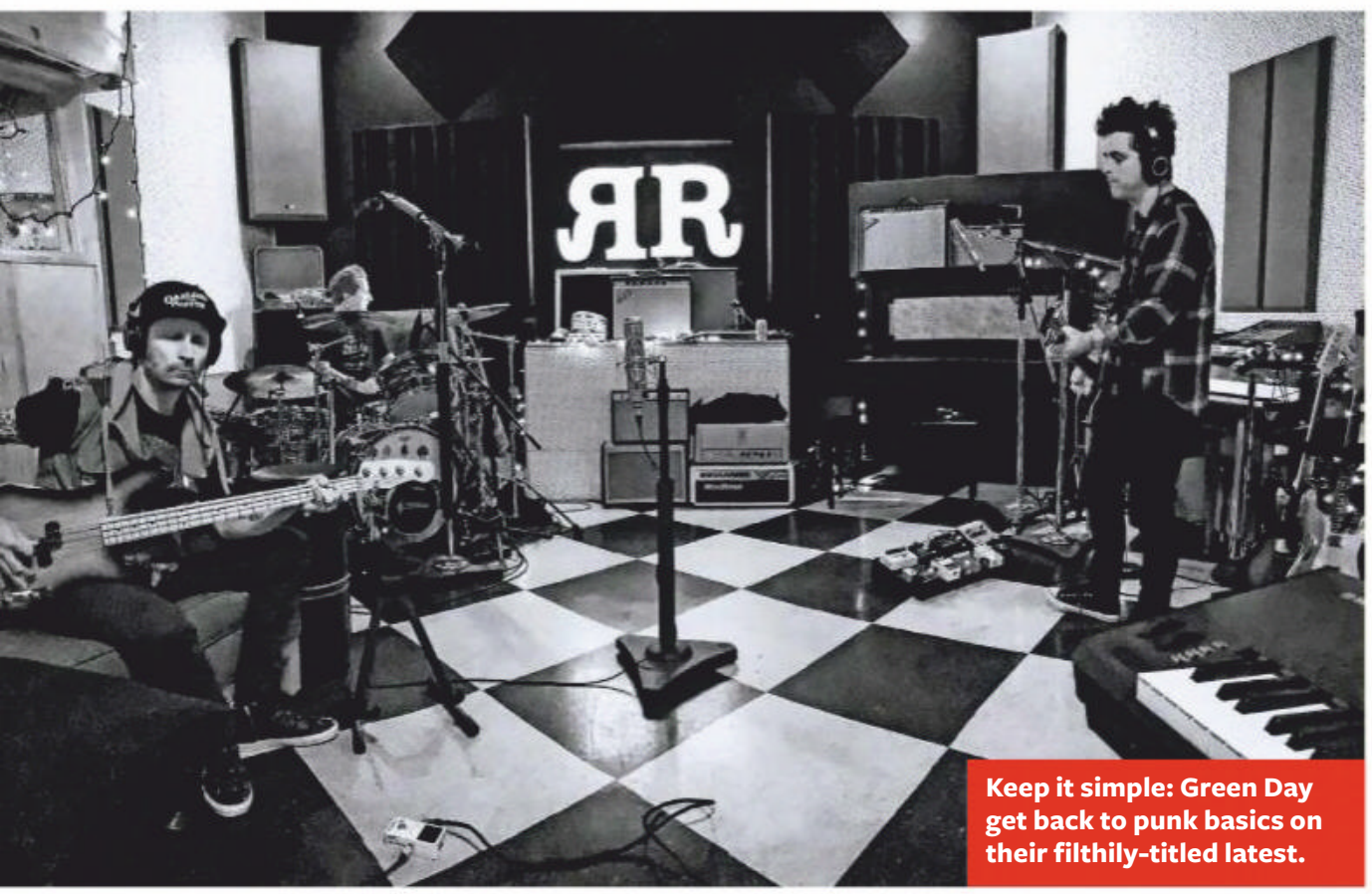
The latter is evident on the title track, the first song Armstrong wrote for the record. It's a burst of garage-soul that sees the singer unleashing an unexpected, Smokey Robinson-on-amphetamines falsetto. Though that's not as surprising as another key influence cited by the singer on the album.

"I've been really influenced by Kendrick Lamar," says Armstrong. "The truth that he tells is so real, whether he's singing about his neighbourhood or a baloney sandwich. We're trying to keep it as real as that." Did he think about rapping? "Of course. But I'd fail miserably. I can't rap at all."

For all that, Father Of All Motherfuckers – produced by Butch Walker, whose CV also includes collaborations with everyone from Taylor Swift to Weezer – isn't going to scare the punk rock horses. "Guitar, bass and drums," says bassist Mike Dirnt. "We're Green Day, we're always gonna be Green Day no matter what." From the Little Richard-via-Hamburg-era-Beatles rush of Stab You In The Heart to I Was A Teenage Teenager's cartoony chorus, there's a joyous-bordering-on-deranged air to the album. It's a rock'n'roll party record at a point when rock'n'roll party records are in short supply.

"Yeah, it's that, but it's also depressing a little bit," says Armstrong. "It's like that moment where you're being a drunk buffoon crawling on the dancefloor, going, 'I think I lost my phone.'" Still, the craziness enveloping the world right now is hard to completely shut out. Political undercurrents swirl beneath Father Of All Motherfuckers' surface, even if Armstrong resists finger-pointing.

"There are political moments on the record, but I didn't want to beat on the drum that everyone has been beating on," says Armstrong. "I'm bored of talking about Donald Trump. It's exhausting and depressing." Father Of All Motherfuckers is anything but exhausting and depressing. If we are hurtling towards the end of the world at full speed, at least Green Day are going down dancing. *DAVE EVERLEY*



Keep it simple: Green Day get back to punk basics on their filthily-titled latest.

MICHAEL CLEMENT

Lucky 13: Green Day (from left, Tré Cool, Billie Joe Armstrong and Mike Dirnt) embrace their ADHD.

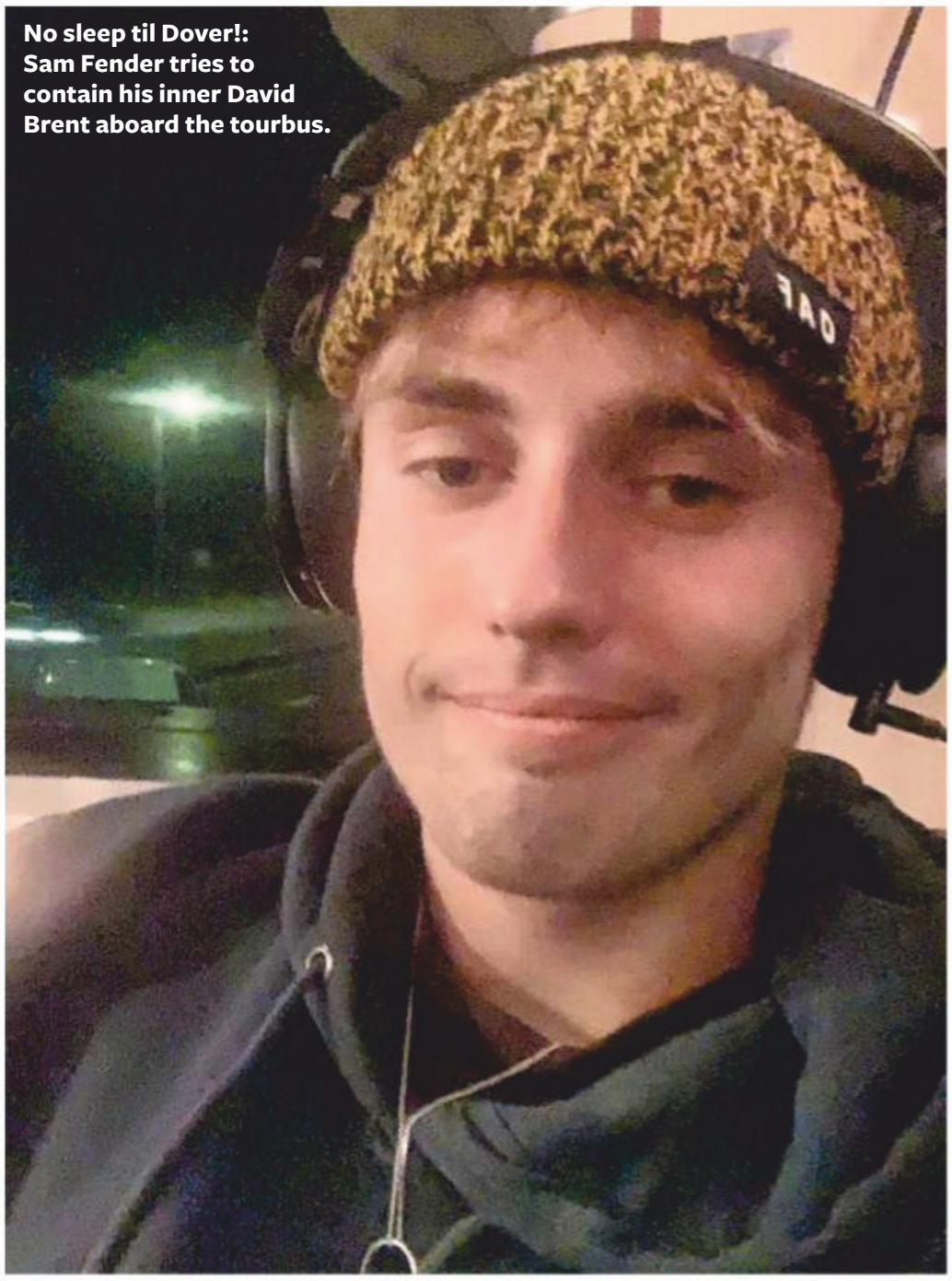
> **"I'm bored of long songs. My attention span is gone."**
> **Billie Joe Armstrong**

Where Are You Right Now?

SAM FENDER

The Geordie star on being mates with Silvio from The Sopranos, why Newcastle is the New Jersey of England and his favourite B-movie.

Hello, Sam, where are you right now?
I'm on a tourbus, driving down to Dover.
What's the driver like? Tourbus drivers always seem to be very interesting characters.
We've got one called Pete and he's a legend. He's been touring for years. He was the driver for Radiohead back in the early '00s. He might have been the bus driver on the David Brent film, Life On The Road.
How do you think your bus behaviour compares with David Brent?
I think we all have a bit of Brent in us. Everybody has a bit of Brent in them. Normally at a house party when I'm off my face I have a moment of realisation that I am a little bit like David Brent. A sobering, horrifying moment of anxiety when you realise that you might be like David Brent.
What are the entertainment vibes on the bus?
We had a PS4 on one of them which was mint. This one's got a PS3 so I'm slightly gutted cos I was gonna bring some PS4 games. I think we might buy a communal PS4 for all of the buses. The last bus was the best cos it had The Sopranos and loads of HBO stuff built into it. I've just started watching The Sopranos and I absolutely love it. I'm hooked.
The Sopranos is the best. Who's your favourite character so far?
Silvio, cos Steven Van Zandt is my mate in real life. We've been out a few times, he's really sweet. He keeps an eye on us. I met him first in Newcastle and I went for food with him and his wife Maureen to speak about his charity and he ended up inviting me onstage at Newcastle so I sang with him. Then he came to a gig in New York and I saw him again.
Wow, you and Silvio are proper mates then. What did he think of Newcastle?
I think he likes it. I tried to tell him that where I'm from is like the English New Jersey. I guess it is cos there's Jersey Shore and Geordie Shore.
You've been on the road for lots of 2019. What would you say is the world's general impression of Newcastle?
I think we're often portrayed as comedic characters cos we've got a funny accent, so I think that's the general consensus. But there's Sting, Brian Johnson from AC/DC, there's me, there's Little Mix, there's a fair few Geordies in the music scene.
Don't forget about Jimmy Nail.
Jimmy Nail, aye, Crocodile Shoes.
Do you think Jimmy Nail wrote Crocodile Shoes slightly too high for his own voice?
Potentially. It seems to be a Geordie thing, cos Sting does that. He writes songs that are fucking so high that nobody can sing them. I think now that he's got older, he's probably like, "Why the fuck did I do that?" And I'm one of them too. Some of the songs on my album I wrote when I was 19 or 20 and my voice has naturally got a bit deeper. I've had to drop the key for some of them cos I'm like, "Fucking hell!"
Your record is called Hypersonic Missiles. Did you look at different sorts of missiles when you were looking for a title or just go with the first one you saw?
Well, I did have a little shop round the missile aisle. The second record might be called Surface To Air Missiles.
There's also a missile called Satan 2.
That's a great one. Who made that? The Americans surely. Satan 2 sounds like an American thing. It sounds like some awful movie. My stepdad used to get all these shit movies from car boot sales, all these bullshit B-movies. I think the reason I'm so fucked in the head is cos I watched so many shit films that never ever made it to the actual cinema.
What was your favourite?
One was called City Dragon, which is probably one of the shittest films I've ever seen in my entire life. So shit that it's good. It's just this dude who's sick at kung-fu.
You should get it on the bus. What will you be doing in 20 minutes?
Probably still on the bus, waiting to get to Dover.
Do you stay in one spot or move around the bus every half-an-hour or so?
I kind of go upstairs and try and be quiet because, as you can see, I'm a chatterbox so I have to make a conscious effort to meditate and be quiet.
OK, enjoy your quiet time.
Go and check out City Dragon!
I will.
See you!
NIALL DOHERTY



No sleep til Dover!: Sam Fender tries to contain his inner David Brent aboard the tourbus.

"Sting writes songs that are so high nobody can sing them."

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★★★★★ DAILY STAR

★★★★★ TIMES

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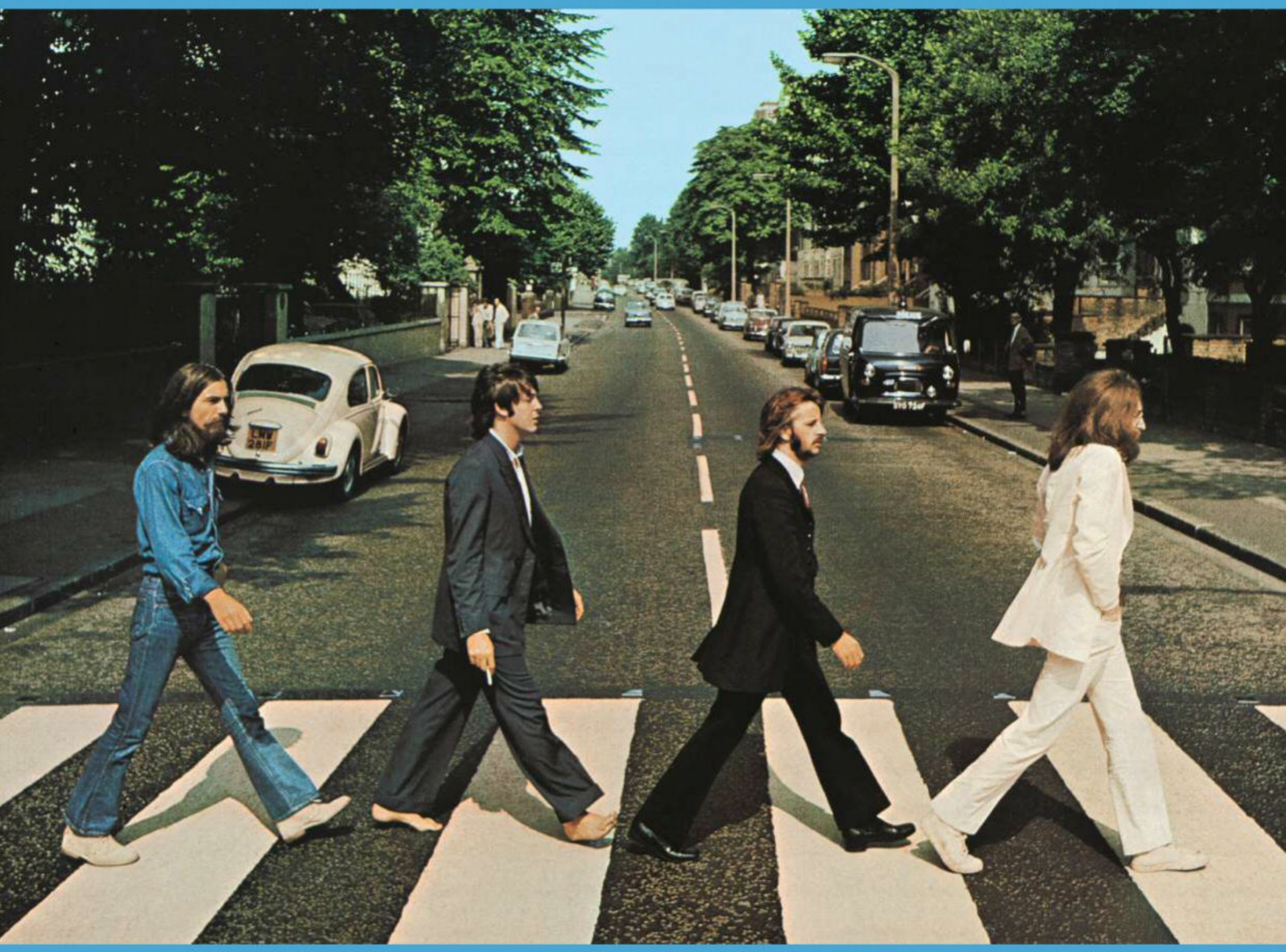

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CELESTE

Smoky, jazz-tinged soul reimagined for the modern age.

Tortured existence. Soulful melancholy. Emotional hardship. These are what you might expect of Celeste Waite given the handful of singles and EPs that she's released so far under the name Celeste. In person, though, Waite has a huge smile. It's an irresistibly toothy grin, the kind you can't help but grin right back at. She can't help it – stopping off in North London before soundcheck, Waite is having a great time. "It's still so exciting to be travelling and playing," she says with the enthusiasm of someone who actually means it.

Get This Track:
Lately

For Fans Of:
Adele, Solange, Amy Winehouse

Earlier this year she released Lately, a languid R&B EP with a late-night air. From the familial insecurity of Father's Son to the title song that sways to the rhythm of a pre-break-up capital-T Talk, it addressed various facets of love. Her songs seem to encapsulate something of her birthplace (Los Angeles), her first real home (London)

"Nina Simone's voice was so striking to me, even when I was five years old. It stopped me in my tracks."

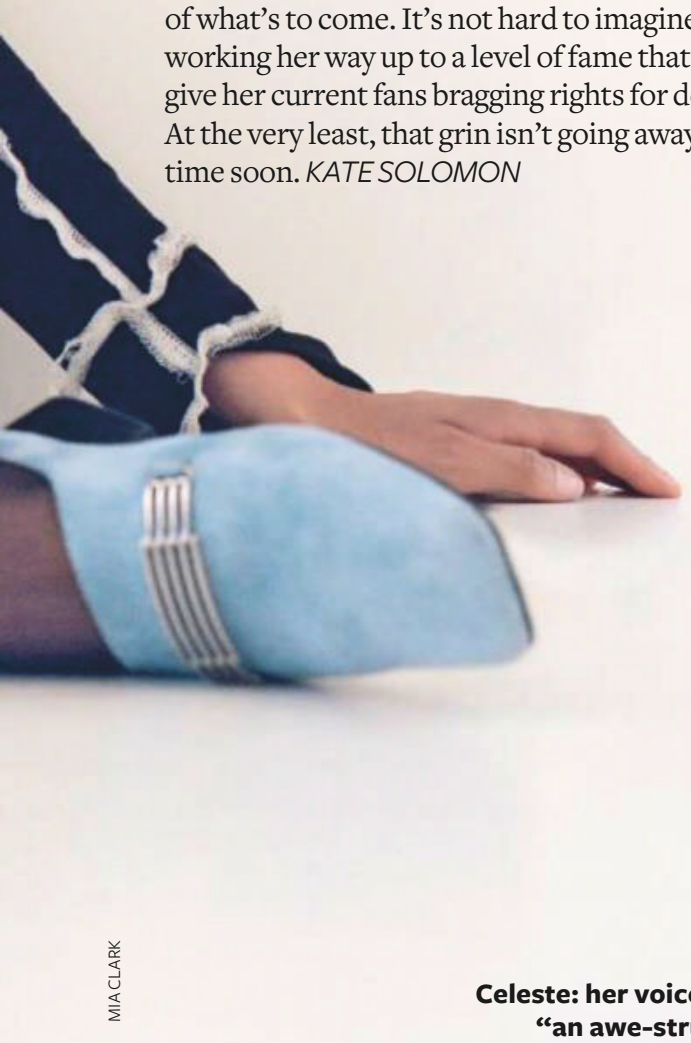
and the city she grew up in (Brighton) all at once; seedy glamour, no-nonsense lyrics and a tendency to care a little bit too much.

When we meet, Waite has just arrived back in London from her first European headline shows. The tour took place in intimate but opulent venues. "They were small but looked like the Albert Hall, really traditional – one was an old theatre and one was a cinema," she says. Theatres and cinemas seem like the perfect venues for Celeste's voice. Landing somewhere between Aretha and Amy, it's a voice that demands smoky jazz clubs, red curtains and an awe-struck hush rather than the chatter of a crowded dive bar.

That style is no surprise given her decades-long fascination with the jazz and soul greats. Even as a young child she found herself drawn to Ella Fitzgerald and Nina Simone, admiring Fitzgerald's cheekiness, Franklin's wall of unabashed emotion and Simone's depth. "I remember hearing Nina Simone for the first time," she says, leaning in. "Her voice was so deep and it was so striking to me, even when I was like four or five years old. It stopped me in my tracks. I asked my granddad, 'Oh my God, what is this?'"

With the "wrong" sort of voice for it, a year of stage school shortly after made her conclude, petulantly, that she wasn't made for theatre; in fact, it drove her away from any kind of performing altogether. "I was like, 'I hate acting! I hate singing! My favourite subject is science!'" Eventually, a supportive music teacher made her wonder if she might prefer singing to safety goggles, spotting her rich voice and encouraging her to exercise it whenever possible. And she hasn't stopped since.

Upcoming single Stop This Flame showcases Celeste's lighter side, an irresistible hip-shaker that suggests those early songs were a mere taste of what's to come. It's not hard to imagine her working her way up to a level of fame that will give her current fans bragging rights for decades. At the very least, that grin isn't going away any time soon. *KATE SOLOMON*



MIA CLARK

Celeste: her voice demands "an awe-struck hush."

Rex Orange County's Alexander O'Connor: "growing wings."

ON THE STEREO

THE TUNES ON REPEAT IN THE Q OFFICE THIS MONTH.

Rex Orange County
10/10
There's a frailty to the music of Surrey singer-songwriter Rex Orange County but his soulful, lo-fi sound grows wings on this standout from his first full-length album, its plucked acoustics blossoming into an orchestral ballad.
Out: now, on Rex Orange County.

The 1975
Frail State Of Mind
The forthcoming album from the Manchester quartet promises to explore the outer reaches of their sonic palette. Following the hardcore-tinged People, this latest single mixes Burial-style beats, dusty electronic soundscapes and a yearning vocal.
Out: now, on Dirty Hit.

Michael Kiwanuka
Piano Joint (This Kind Of Love)
Kiwanuka's brilliant third album has been on constant rotation in the Q office. This is one of its best songs, a spine-tingling ballad that gets better with every listen.
Out: now, on Polydor.

Tame Impala
It Might Be Time
Kevin Parker says that Tame Impala's new LP is influenced by '70s stadium rock and Meat Loaf. It Might Be Time is short on brow-mopping operatics, but it is an excellent mash up of clattering drums, siren-like synths and the sort of gloopy keyboards more often found on a Supertramp record.
Out: now, on Fiction.

Frank Ocean
In My Room
One of two new songs that the R&B superstar released earlier this month, In My Room strays from the low-key dreaminess of 2016's Blonde, Ocean's delivery urgent and on edge until his soothing falsetto elevates the track's coda.
Out: now, on Blonded.

Deerhunter
Timebends
For one of indie-rock's more experimental bands, Deerhunter's last LP was a fairly straightforward affair. They counter-balance it with this, a 12-minute single that veers from a piano ballad into an extended psych-rock jam and back again.
Out: now, on 4AD.

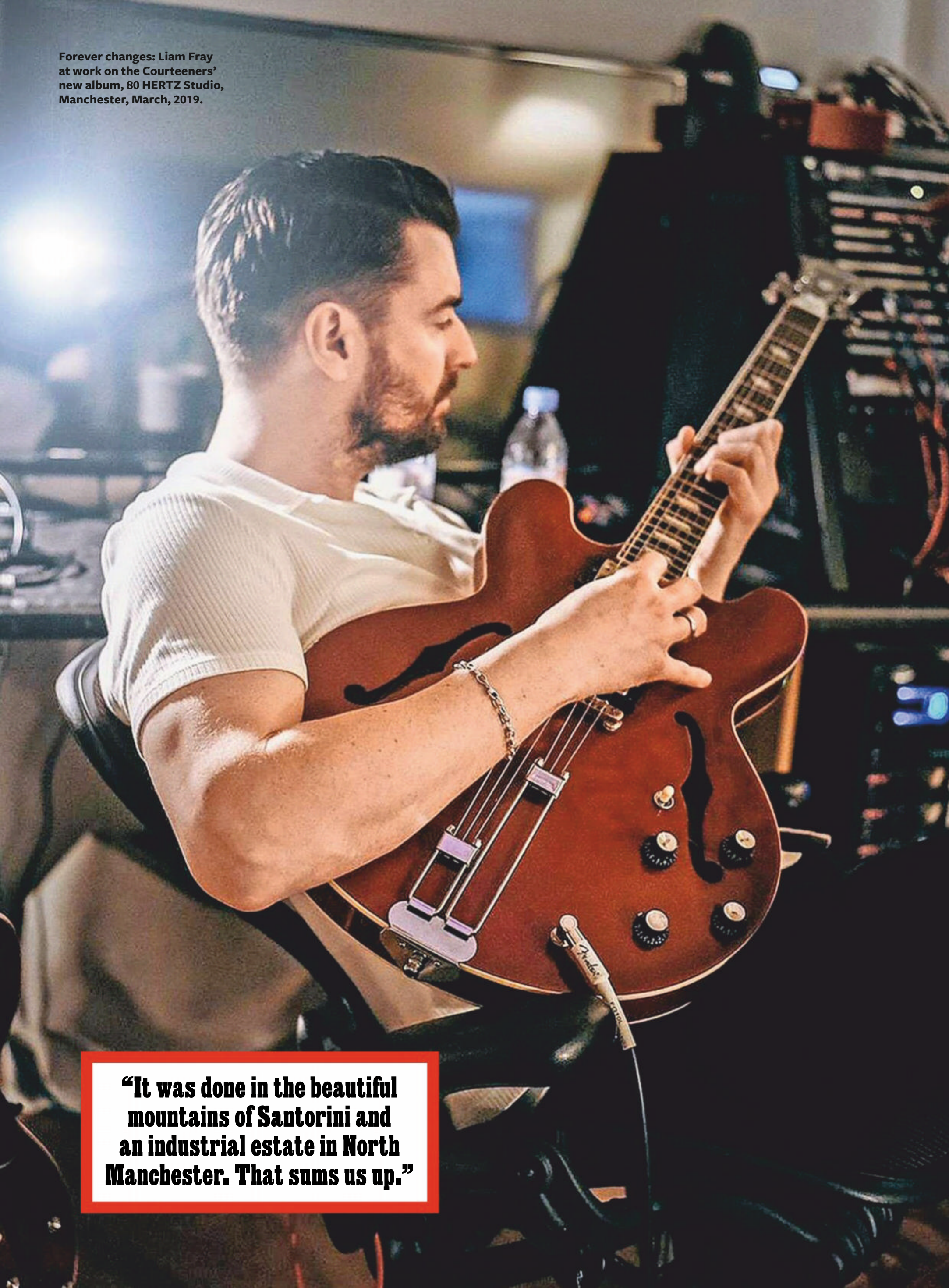
J Hus
Must Be
The London rapper hones his distinctive take on grime with this comeback single, a meld of dancehall rhythms and Afrobeat patterns that build impressively under his magnetic delivery.
Out: now, on Black Butter.

Coldplay
Champion Of The World
The quartet's new album is full of stripped-down interludes and sonic experimentation, but Coldplay's anthemic standards are kept up here. The swaying guitar chimes of Champion Of The World is another big singalong to add to their live set.
Out: 22 November, on Parlophone.

Erin Rae
Some Misunderstanding
The Nashville singer recently recorded a Lagniappe Session, a covers project instigated by the Aquarium Drunkard blog. Her countrified take on this Gene Clark track replaces the drama of the original with an anguished restraint.
Out: now, on Independent.

Róisín Murphy
Narcissus
The latest in what has become a long line of excellent stand-alone singles from Murphy, Narcissus's disco beat and swooping strings are the perfect antidote for the descent into winter.
Out: now, on Mickey Murphy's Daughter.

POONAH GHANA



Forever changes: Liam Fray at work on the Courteeners' new album, 80 HERTZ Studio, Manchester, March, 2019.

"It was done in the beautiful mountains of Santorini and an industrial estate in North Manchester. That sums us up."

In The Studio

COURTEENERS' BRAVE NEW WORLD

Indie-rock trio explore new sounds on their first new album in four years.

Every now and then as he was making Courteeners' sixth LP, Liam Fray would check his social media accounts and find a cluster of fans hurrying him along. "Where's your new album? Where's your new songs?" they would read. It has been three years since the Manchester indie-rock trio's last record and their leader would feel an ever-so-slight pressure pushing down on his shoulders. Tick tock, tick tock. "That side of social media is so intense," he says, down the phone from a Manchester rehearsal room. "It's nice that people want to hear what you've got but if you're looking at that all the time, it starts weighing on your mind. But I knew the songs were coming."

Emboldened by a decade and more of success, Fray chose to take the long way round for the album, titled More. Again. Forever.. After abandoning the initial plan to dive straight into it when touring duties for their 2016 record Mapping The Rendezvous were completed, he decided to wait it out for his mojo to return. And then he went searching for it on holiday. "I went to America on a bit of a trip," he says, "spent some time in Yosemite sniffing in the pine. It was really good, getting away from it all." The extended break, combined with a period off the booze ("It was insane, like, 'Is this how my brain works?' But don't get me wrong, I still like a Guinness"), relit the spark and the songs came thick and fast.

Fray wasn't quite done with the exotic locations, though. "We went to Santorini to record," he admits. "We were there for three weeks. We did a lot in the first week. And not so much in weeks two and three. There was a lot of, 'These tracks are so good, we can just kick back now!'" The album was completed back in Manchester at 80 HERTZ Studios in Newton Heath. "So it was basically done in the beautiful mountains of Santorini and an industrial estate in North Manchester. That sums us up."

More. Again. Forever. is a record laced with an adventurous spirit, Fray telling himself and his bandmates, guitarist Daniel "Conan" Moores and drummer Michael Campbell, that if you're not going to take risks six albums in, entering your mid-30s, when are you? "The loyal fanbase helps cos you know they will probably trust you a bit more and come with you," he says. That sense of bravery is captured in the title track, unveiled by the band last month. One of their most experimental songs, it combines a dance-punk groove with a spoken Pet Shop Boys-style vocal (although it's hard to imagine Neil Tennant using the word "twat" in a song). "That was this mad bassline I came up with and I just started talking over the top," explains Fray. "It's in that LCD Soundsystem world. I love all that, the repetition and the subtleties."

The singer braced himself for the social media reactions on the night of release. "You wouldn't want to go on my Twitter feed when something new comes out," he admits. "It's all, 'Where's Not Nineteen Forever?!' 'It's on fucking Spotify, mate, go and listen to it!' We just thought, 'Why not?' We've got singles, they're coming, it's fine, we're not completely stupid. We thought it was a bit braver and as soon as you start thinking a track is brave then the shackles are off and the lyrics flow and you start being braver."

Other songs on the album will be more up the street of Courteeners traditionalists. Better Man sounds like The Smiths being swept up in Doves' expansiveness, while Hanging Off Your Cloud is a stirring, orchestral anthem. "There's some amazing strings on that, it's got a mad, almost hip-hop, beat and shitloads of strings," says Fray. Elsewhere, opening track Heart Attack is under the spell of Talking Heads and Roxy Music. "I guess it's more an indication of where my head is going on the next stuff I do," says the frontman.

Fray says More. Again. Forever. is a record about reflecting on where you've been and where you're going next. He's in his mid-30s now, as are some of the fans who've grown up with him.

"There's a lot of self-care, just taking stock," he says. Courteeners' sixth album has been four years in the making but Liam Fray got there in the end. He found a way forward, and managed to fit in a few vacations while he did. *NIALL DOHERTY*

WHAT WE KNOW

Due: 17 January 2020

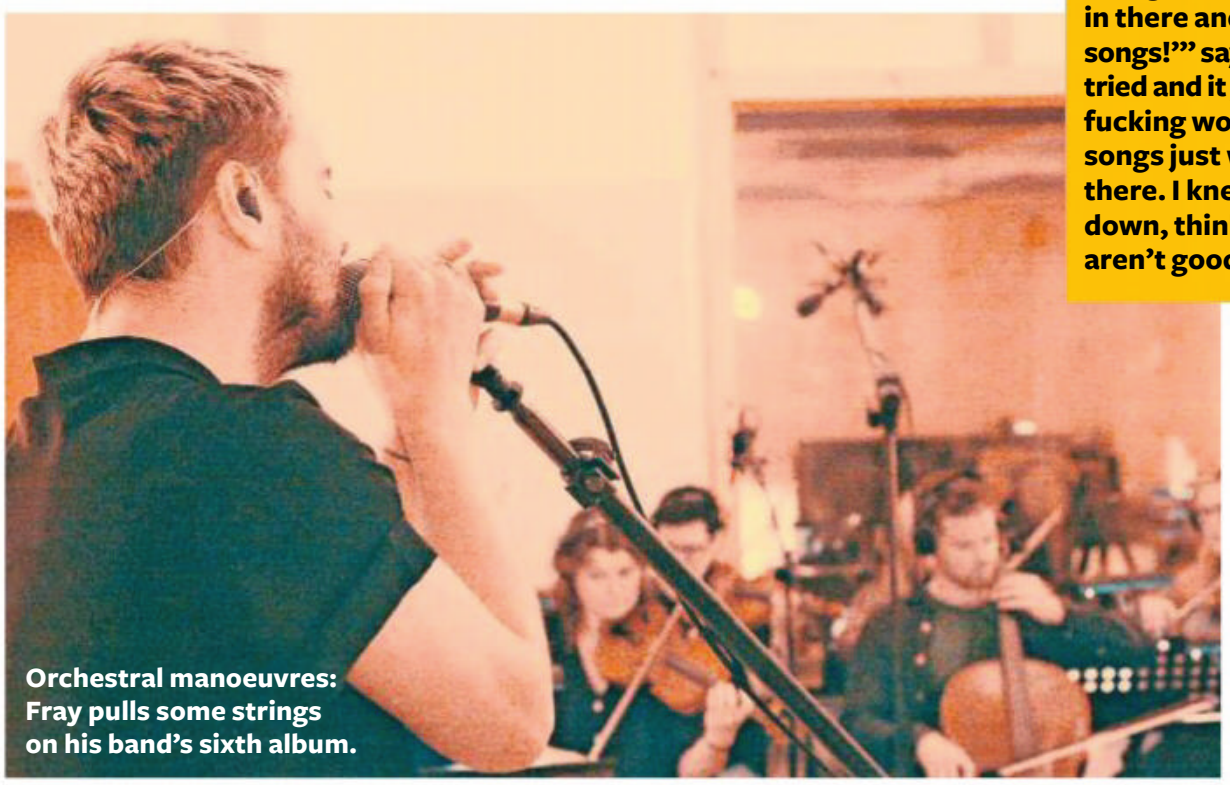
Title: More. Again. Forever.

Song Titles: Heart Attack, Heavy Jacket, More. Again. Forever., Better Man, Hanging Off Your Cloud, Previous Parties, The Joy Of Missing Out, One Day At A Time, Take It On The Chin, Is Heaven Even Worth It?

Studios: Black Rock Studios, Santorini, 80 HERTZ, Manchester

Producers: Liam Fray, Joe Cross, Rich Turvey

Fascinating Fact: The band scrapped an album's worth of demos before making More. Again. Forever. proper. "After we finished the Mapping The Rendezvous tour, we felt confident and thought, 'Let's get back in there and do some songs!'" says Fray. "We tried and it just didn't fucking work. The songs just weren't there. I knew deep down, thinking, 'These aren't good enough.'"



LINDSEY HOLT

Orchestral manoeuvres: Fray pulls some strings on his band's sixth album.

"Eat, drink and be merry – or else..." James Blunt, landlord of The Fox & Pheasant, lays down some house rules.

OUT TO LUNCH WITH...

JAMES BLUNT

The singer-songwriter and Twitter comeback king shows us around his new local. Which he owns.

Whenever the landlord of The Fox & Pheasant wants to clear his pub at kicking-out time, he puts James Blunt's You're Beautiful on the jukebox. "Works every time," he beams.

He's allowed to say this, because the landlord is Blunt himself. This once-dilapidated boozer located in a Fulham mews used to be the former army captain-turned-singer-songwriter's local. "We called it The Fox & Unpleasant," he says.

That was before he and his wife of five years, Sofia, bought it and spent 18 months renovating it. It's now a classy, cosy gastropub with 4.5 stars on TripAdvisor.

Blunt has invited Q here ostensibly to talk about his new album, Once Upon A Mind, though the chance to show off the pub is more than just coincidence. We grab a table in one of the side rooms. Does he want to get a couple of dishes to share? "I'm a really bad sharer," he admits. "And I eat really fast. In the army, you're taught to wolf it down in case the enemy are coming over the hill."

Blunt was a big fan of army rations, with baked beans and sausage in a silver foil bag being a particular favourite. "If you couldn't boil it, you'd stick it under your armpit and get heat from body temperature. Delicious." Another army staple were so-called "biscuits brown". "Their sole job is to block you up for a week at a time so you don't have to keep slipping away into the forest to dig a hole."

Hopefully there'll be no constipation-inducing 'treats' today. Instead, Blunt goes for stone bass with celeriac and fennel, while Q opts for battered haddock and fries. Our host orders two pints of the house lager, Fox 'n' Fez.

"*[London brewery]* Truman's made a lager, but nobody bought it, so I said I'd take it off them," he says. Was he tempted to put his name on it? "No, it doesn't really work because of the whole Cockney rhyming slang thing: 'I'm supping on a James Blunt.'"

If Blunt has a talent beyond making hit records and driving tanks, it's self-deprecation. He's the undisputed champion of the Twitter troll takedown (Sample troll tweet: "My guilty pleasure is James Blunt." Sample Blunt reply: "Mine's anal!")

"It's incredibly easy to reply if you don't care," he says. "And I really, really don't care."

The Fox & Pheasant isn't his first venture into the culinary world. In 2012, he opened a high-altitude restaurant in the Swiss ski resort of Verbier. Diners would travel up in the officially named James Blunt Chair Lift. "The ultimate accolade," he says.

He joked that he was installing a soundsystem in the chair lift that would only play his own music to keep queues down. Once, he was in the cabin when he heard a guy repeat the line on a woman he was trying to chat up. "I lifted up my goggles and went, 'Mate, that's my joke.' He sat there in pained silence for the whole journey."

Talk turns to his old university friend, TV survivalist Bear Grylls. As students, they'd go busking together, serenading couples with songs they made up on the spot until the lovebirds coughed up to make them stop. "We were buskers-slash-muggers." Buggers? He pauses. "Hang on, that paints a different picture." Has Bear invited him on his TV show? "Not yet. He's doing Obama, the Indian Prime Minister, those kind of people first. I think he's working up the courage to ask me."

The only time Blunt is remotely serious is when he's talking about his family, a subject he addresses on more than one song on the new album. The emotional heart of Once Upon A Mind is the plaintive piano ballad Monsters, dedicated to his seriously ill father. "He needs a new kidney," says Blunt.

His domestic situation is a happier subject. Has getting married and having kids changed him? "Of course. Though we still manage to have a good time," he says. When was the last time he saw the sun come up? "I was in Ibiza for three months in the summer," is all he says by way of explanation.

He downs the last of his Fox 'n' Fez. Only one drink for him today. His new motorbike is outside and he's riding it later. When he's in Ibiza he drives a tuk-tuk that he bought on holiday in Thailand. "People stop me and say, 'How much to Ibiza Town, mate?' And then they'll see it's me and go, 'God, it's you. *[Sympathetically]* What went wrong?'"

He's far too polite to say it, but nothing has gone wrong. Whether it's his career, his pub or his ability to cook a meal in his armpit, James Blunt continues to win at life. *DAVE EVERLEY*

"In the army, you're taught to wolf it down in case the enemy are coming over the hill."

Favourite restaurant?
"Hot Wings Café on Melrose in LA. It's super rough and ready, but the clientele are hot wings aficionados."
Most expensive meal?
"The sushi place at the top of the old BBC Centre. Only 14 seats in there, so you have to book out the whole place. It costs 20 grand or something ridiculous."

Culinary speciality?
"Ordering pizza from Tops Pizza on the Fulham Road."
Favourite condiment?
"Mayonnaise."
Dream dining companion?
"Well, I've really enjoyed today..."
Death Row dinner?
"An In-N-Out Burger as a starter. Then I'd move onto hot wings."

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Breaking

JUST MUSTARD

Grandiose goth rock from Irish pals of The Murder Capital and Fontaines D.C..

The origins of a band's name rarely makes for a particularly illuminating line of enquiry. Irish five-piece Just Mustard's choice of moniker feels so at odds with the glowering, pitch-black grandeur of their music it does beg the question though: what *were* they thinking?

"It was a bad joke that just stuck. It was something to do with socks..." sheepishly laughs 24-year-old singer Katie Bell, stood alongside guitarist David Noonan, 27, in the kitchen of the group's shared home in Dundalk near the Irish border. "I wish there was a story and I wish it made sense."

Thankfully, the band are far more conscientious when it comes to their music. Sitting somewhere between The Cure at their most apocalyptically gloomy, Mazzy Star's ethereal drift and the industrial grind of Nine Inch Nails, Just Mustard's songs are meticulously put together over weeks and weeks, the group gradually building up a maelstrom of sound over loops and melodic ideas. It's a process they communicate in somewhat abstract terms.

For Fans Of: **The Cure, Pumarosa, The Murder Capital**

Get This Track: **Seven**

"Sometimes we'll talk about shapes for stuff. So it's like a triangular baseline or a square bassline," notes Noonan. "For some reason I always imagine drum beats as looking like stairs in my head, like steps. It's hard to explain..."

Though you might not initially hear it in their kohl-smeared goth rock, the band – completed by guitarist Shane Maguire, 28, bassist Rob Clarke, 27, and drummer Mete Kaylon, 27 – site Aphex Twin, Portishead, Burial, J Dilla and Hans Zimmer as key influences. They even took a band trip to the cinema to see Dunkirk when they were recording last year's self-released debut album, Wednesday, for inspiration.

"We all love film soundtracks," says Bell. "If we had to soundtrack one film I'd say it would be From Dusk Till Dawn..." "Or Blue Hawaii," chips in Noonan."Yeah, somewhere between the two would be perfect. An Elvis vampire film." It may have yet to accompany images of virgin blood splattering onto blue suede shoes, but Wednesday was nominated for Ireland's prestigious Choice Music Prize last year. With touring mates Fontaines D.C. and The Murder Capital also making waves on both sides of the Irish Sea, Just Mustard are part of a surge of thrilling new acts coming out of Ireland currently. "There's just so much good music in Ireland right now. Everything I'm listening to is Irish bands and Irish artists," says Noonan."The Choice Music Prize is going to be such a hard one this year," agrees Bell. "I'm glad we didn't make our album this year!"

With a follow-up already in the works for 2020, they shouldn't be overly concerned about being overshadowed by other bands, regardless of where they come from.

CHRIS CATCHPOLE

Meet me in the bathroom: Just Mustard (Katie Bell, left, David Noonan, second right) prepare to spice things up.

"I always imagine drum beats as looking like stairs in my head. It's hard to explain..."

Strings Attached

Pale Waves' Hugo Silvani gives his tips on playing an instrument, and how Fender Play can help.

Being a great guitarist takes a combination of skill and imagination, a mix of knowing your chops but having the creativity to move beyond just emulating your heroes.

Pale Waves guitarist Hugo Silvani might not have had any formal lessons when he first started out, but he knows the importance of knowing your instrument and knowing how to play it right before you start your own journey as a musician.

"Learning the fundamentals is important and is something that maybe hindered me when I was younger," he says. "Things like correct picking technique, the correct way to change chords, hand positions. You can get to a certain point and then it can start to work backwards and you stop seeing progression if you haven't done that."

Silvani first picked up the guitar at primary school, but, frustrated by not being able to progress, put it down until his teens, at which point he started playing along to songs by The Strokes and Nirvana to hone his skills. The key for him to developing his own style and discovering the sweeping guitarscapes that make Pale Waves' so exciting was to use that as a starting point then experiment and try out new things.

"Experiment as much as possible with anything you can get your hands on like pedals and amps. Work alongside other musicians that you look up to. Even if it's just one of your friends who is really good on guitar. Playing with great musicians always makes you a better player," he advises new guitarists. "Just try to discover what your sound is and how you're going to translate that into your music."

That's where Fender Play comes in. Via the app or on the web, the new online learning platform allows you to choose a huge variety of styles and genres to learn, to improve your playing, get the building blocks down and then develop your own sound.

"You've got to discover on your own how you play, what you're into and how you work it into your music," he reiterates. "I know a lot of people who are incredible guitarists, miles better than I am, but wouldn't really write anything that would be inspiring to others. They've learnt the songs that they listen to but it's never gone past that."

With Fender Play you can learn to improve your playing and develop your own sound.

With Fender Play, you can not only learn to play like your favourite guitarists but also develop your own style and, who knows, maybe inspire another generation of musicians.

"We've had loads of kids come up to us at gigs and be like, 'We've just done this demo, we love your sound and we're really influenced by it, will you take a listen?'" says Silvani. "It's bizarre being in a position where you can influence people. It's really nice but it's humbling."

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Pale Waves' Hugo Silvani: "Try to discover what your sound is and how you're going to translate that."

NIALL LEA

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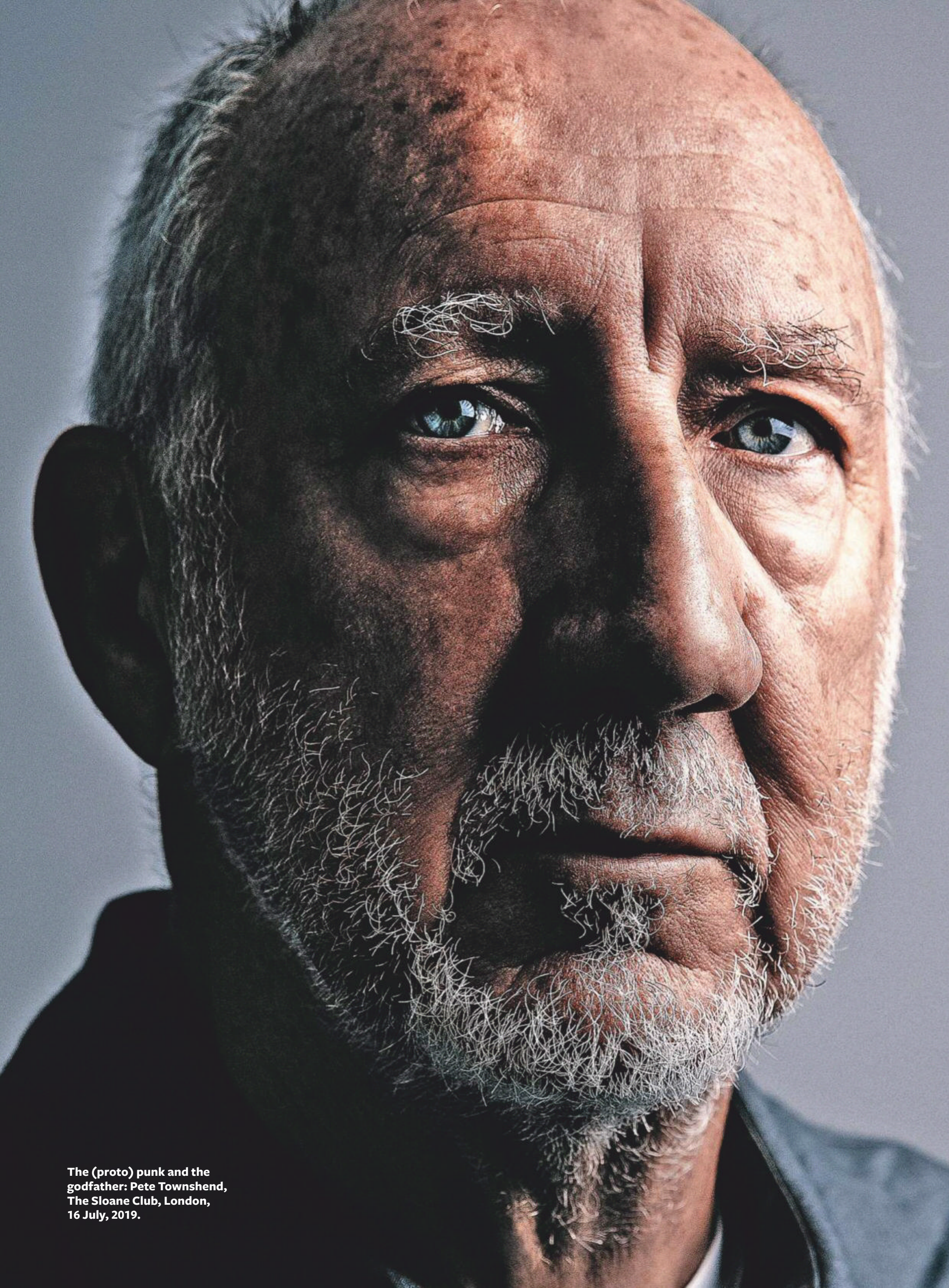


The (proto) punk and the godfather: Pete Townshend, The Sloane Club, London, 16 July, 2019.

TALKING

At 74 years old, the urgency and invention that has always propelled The Who's

'BOUT HIS

Pete Townshend remains undimmed. Tom Doyle meets the guitarist ahead of a new Who album and a novel

GENERATION

to discuss his past, present and future. "All creativity is a kind of madness," Townshend explains.

[AND YOURS TOO]

PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHAEL CLEMENT

AS FAR AS LUXURIOUS ROCK STAR

privileges go, the idea of taking a year off work has to be one of the most enviable ones. Between October 2017 and October 2018, Pete Townshend decided to do just that and gave himself a 12-month sabbatical. Three hundred and sixty-five days, more or less, of nothing to do. Time to empty the mind and properly relax. It didn't quite turn out that way.

To start off with, the forever-fascinated Who guitarist put his feet up and began reading books on psychology and philosophy. Then, he delved into the world of computer coding and was delighted to discover that through his own programming, he could get his PC to say hello to him.

That achieved – of course – he soon turned creatively fidgety, opening up the chapter files of a novel, The Age Of Anxiety, that he'd started a decade before. In-between writing sessions to finish it off, he took long walks where ideas for songs began to bubble up in his mind.

"So, I was doing reading and exercise and brainwork," he says today, sipping tea and biting into a biscuit in a conference room at the super-posh private members' Sloane Club in Chelsea. "And out of that came all the new music for The Who."

In other words, Pete Townshend isn't great when it comes to enjoying aimless downtime. The result though is the first Who album in 13 years, the simply- and artfully-titled WHO, which revives Townshend's half-century-plus recording studio partnership with singer Roger Daltrey (after recent years on the road together performing their old classics).

"Roger can be a difficult person to work with. When I first sent him the new demos, he did not respond."

Or, at least, that's how it looks on the face of it. In reality, Daltrey recorded his vocals for the album in a different studio, revealing perhaps the ongoing strain in their creative partnership established in 1961. "Roger can be a difficult person to work with," says Townshend. "When I first sent him the demos, he did not respond."

For his part, the singer has said that he didn't initially play the rough sketches of the guitarist's new songs because at the time he was suffering from a perforated eardrum and couldn't listen to any music whatsoever.

"Well, that's what he says," Townshend states. "I'm not saying it was an excuse. I just think that you don't have a perforated eardrum for 13 weeks, y'know?"

Whatever the truth, it highlights the respectful distance the pair maintain from one another. It has always been this way: Pete arty and cerebral, Roger earthy and no-nonsense. Both have in recent years written their autobiographies – Townshend's Who I Am in 2012, Daltrey's Thanks A Lot Mr Kibblewhite in 2018. But neither bothered to read the other's book.

"Nope," Townshend shrugs and smiles. "He might think he knows me and I might think I know him, but we're so different. And often if we do interviews together, they just stall. We tried to do some *[recently]* and a couple of times I said I'd written a song about fishing. And Roger said, 'You don't know fucking anything about fishing!' And then he kind of lost his temper with me."

Nonetheless, petty huffs aside, the end products of Pete Townshend's year "off" is a fiery new Who album and a novel, both coming out around the same time. Not that – in keeping with his true, proto-punk nature – he regards either with any kind of reverence.

"One is going to extinguish the other, I hope," offers the 74-year-old with a lifelong appetite for destruction, fixing Q with his piercing blue eyes and erupting into a mischievous cackle.

Pete Townshend: "I don't know why I'm good at what I do. I just do it."

Spend an hour-and-a-half in the company of Pete Townshend and the conversation unpredictably slaloms its way through various unrelated topics: opera to World War II, modern art to R&B, the jazz greats to the rise of the superstar DJ. His ongoing absorption of culture seems to hold no saturation point, which makes him great company and someone who – even in his position as a venerable elder statesman of rock – is firmly plugged into the here and now.

Some things in his world never change, though. Reflecting the outsider figures he created in the past – deaf, dumb and blind (and abused) pinball wizard Tommy; Quadrophenia's young-mod-in-crisis Jimmy – the principal characters in his novel The Age Of Anxiety are burned-out or mentally-damaged rock musicians/artists prone to manic creativity. Townshend himself knew these types of lost, dropout figures back in the late '60s and early '70s, not least his acid casualty contemporaries Syd Barrett and Peter Green of Fleetwood Mac.

"I've seen quite a few people go through it," he reflects. "Peter Green, I used to see him in Richmond High Street, and he had these incredibly long fingernails. He recognised me, but I don't know that *[at first]* I really recognised him.

"What happened to Syd was he left the building. Y'know, when I saw him with Pink Floyd performing in the early days, he was spectacular. And he was on acid. But then maybe three or four months later, I saw him at his flat and he was drifting in and out of the room and his beautiful girlfriend was kind of changing his nappy. That's pretty serious shit."

Townshend had real insight into the grim experiences that both of his fellow musicians had undergone, having tried the potent Sandoz Laboratories form of LSD that was circulating around the London scene at the time. "It was absolutely pure and it was very, very strong," he remembers. "My later wife and I tried it one day and for several hours, it was terrifying. I had a heavy acid trip and I'd left my body. Y'know, it got good in the end, but I think it certainly changed me."

Hence perhaps his attraction to the idea of creatives who've blown out their minds?

"I'm not trying to say that all creative people are mad," he insists. »

Mods and rockers: (clockwise from above) The Who (from left, Roger Daltrey, Keith Moon, Pete Townshend, John Entwistle) in Paris, 1966; Townshend with his trusty Rickenbacker, Wimbledon Palais, 1966; stadium-rocking at the Oakland Coliseum, 1976; perfecting the windmill in Leeds, 1966; getting airborne in Oakland, 1976.

"But I definitely think that we enter into the arena of madness or potential madness when we try to be creative. I think it's a dangerous step. You're giving up your grounding. You're giving up your sense of who you are. And you're saying, 'This isn't good enough. I want something more.'"

Through drugs and music, Townshend's generation were searching for something "other", being war-born kids still living under the threat of utter annihilation. It's unimaginable now in our age of social media and 24-hour news to understand what they endured with the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, when Russia and America came nose-to-nose over the presence of the former's nuclear warheads on the island 90 miles off the South Eastern coast of the US. It was heavy enough for Townshend and his peers just hearing about it in news reports on the radio.

"You're absolutely right," he nods. "I went to college that day and I started working and I thought, 'Why am I bothering? The world's coming to an end.' I was 17 and ready to die, y'know."

Soon after, onstage with The Who, Pete Townshend channelled his fear and rage into his intense and destructive performances, which famously ended up with him and the band violently trashing their equipment. But, these days, doesn't he ever look back and feel a smidgeon of guilt about the trail of broken guitars he left behind him?

"I don't really know how to process the question, to be honest," he twinkles, roguishly. "Surely what's important is that they were valuable. The sacrifice that I made was not pissing money up the wall. In the course of that artistic, explosive expression, I was destroying the principal tool of my public trade."

Performing was always in Pete Townshend's blood. His mum Betty was a singer who fronted orchestras; his dad Cliff a sax-player in RAF-formed dancehall band The Squadronaires. As a kid, travelling on the road with his father, Townshend clearly saw a future life for himself on the stage.

"That's something that's in the genes," he says. "It's like, y'know, if you're Marilyn Monroe, your mum and your dad have got together and produced a very sexy woman. It's got fucking nothing to do with Marilyn Monroe. I don't know why I'm good at what I do. But I do know it's got fuck all to do with me. I just do it."

Gravitating towards one another in West London, the art-minded Townshend, the punchy, streetwise Roger Daltrey, the hyperactive and demented Keith Moon and the taciturn John Entwistle were a band like no other. Together, but somehow always apart, the members of The Who weren't exactly a tight gang of mates.

"Y'know, Keith, John, Roger and I were never a band in the sense »

GETTY, ALAMY

PETE TOWNSHEND

"We were never a band in the sense that people would imagine that a band needed to be. John and Keith spent a lot of time together. They shared a flat, they shared women. But that didn't happen with Roger and I. We were both outsiders."

that people would imagine that a band needed to be," their guitarist stresses. "John and Keith spent a lot of time together. They shared a flat, they shared women. But that didn't happen with Roger and I. We were both outsiders."

Having subsequently down the years watched The Who become frozen in stone as A Classic Band, Townshend – an iconoclast at heart – today can't help but to take a sledgehammer to their reputation.

"That thing about Keith Moon saying that he was the best drummer in the world and that The Who were the best rock'n'roll band in the world? Well, in some people's opinion. And interestingly enough, not in fucking mine! The Stones always thought they were the best, The Beatles always thought they were the best."

But he never felt that about The Who? Really?

"Oh no, absolutely not. No, no. And neither did I think that the Stones or The Beatles were the best either *[laughs]*. No, I just thought we all had our thing."

Pete Townshend isn't someone either who buys into the idea that the '60s were a golden era, never to be rivalled in modern times. As someone who's stared out from the stages of Woodstock in 1969 and Glastonbury 2015, he knows which one he prefers.

"At Glastonbury, the audience is in their bodies," he argues. "Everybody was pretty out of it at Woodstock by the time we got onstage. Glastonbury has arrived at a place now where it's sort of essential to the British way of life. It's almost like scones and jam.

"But it's also a reflection of urban life, y'know, with Stormzy doing such a fucking great gig. Somehow on this little farm in the middle of fucking nowhere, we seem to be expressing a real head-on engagement with political issues, with LGBT issues, with all of the essential, tricky issues of the time. All of it is being debated by the people on the stage and the audience love it."

In this respect, he reckons, "woke" culture has made the modern festival experience immeasurably better.

"Y'know, when this first started to happen," he adds, "only certain people could get away with giving the audience a lecture. I know I wasn't one of them. If I started to lecture the audience, it was, 'Play Magic Bus and shut the fuck up!'" *[laughs]*

This summer, when The Who headlined Wembley Stadium in July, Townshend similarly battered the '60s, by dedicating Won't Get Fooled Again to "hairy hippies who achieved fuck all". A funny thing to say, but does he believe it's true?

"I do," he says. "From the '60s into the '70s, I don't think there was a stable flow of ideas. Y'know what happened to Jimi *[Hendrix]*? What happened to Janis *[Joplin]*? There are a few survivors, but not many."

Of course, only two members of The Who survived. Keith Moon died of a sedative overdose in 1978; John Entwistle of a cocaine-induced heart attack in 2002. In spite of the fact that they've shored up their line-up with other great musicians down the years, Daltrey recently said that he considers The Who to "not really be a band any more." Does Townshend ever look around the stage and think, "There's only half of us here"? "Oh no... I think Roger does," he says. "No, cos we're just playing the music."

In another, ever-present way, Keith Moon is still with Pete Townshend, due to the tinnitus the guitarist suffers, initially caused by the drummer blowing up his bass drum with explosives when performing My Generation on a US TV show in 1967. Townshend still curses Moon for that...

"Oh yeah, that and many other things that were not so much done in public," he grins. "He was a fucking pain in the arse, Keith was. Just a pain in the arse. You look at his childhood and there's no tragedy. There's no difficulty. I can't work out what the fuck he was doing."

Anyone who's witnessed The Who playing live in the past decade or so will know that, even into their old age and with only half of their original line-up, Townshend and Daltrey still perform with fire in their bellies.

"I'm often surprised at myself," admits the guitarist. "I don't get nervous, which is kind of weird. I go out and I think, 'This is going to be a shit gig.' I feel like I'm asleep. But I walk onto the stage and I'm very deeply affected by the music. But I don't come offstage kind of going *[shouts]*, 'Yay, we did it, man! Gimme five!!' You see other people do it and you kind of think, 'What a c**t.'"

Looking at DJ culture, particularly stadium rave, Townshend sees in the present what his generation were always striving towards in the past, namely a sense of mass connection with a huge audience.

"You go on Instagram and you watch the self-exalting stuff that somebody like Armin van Buuren posts," he points out. "He's sitting up there kind of waving his fingers in the air to 200,000 people that are all off their heads on something or other, and he's prepared it all on his laptop at home. I absolutely love him. These tricks that he does with beats and drops and building sequences and stuff actually do make people feel that they're one. Music's had that as a mission for such a long time."

"I don't come offstage going, 'Yay, we did it, man!' You see other people do it and think, 'What a ct.'"**

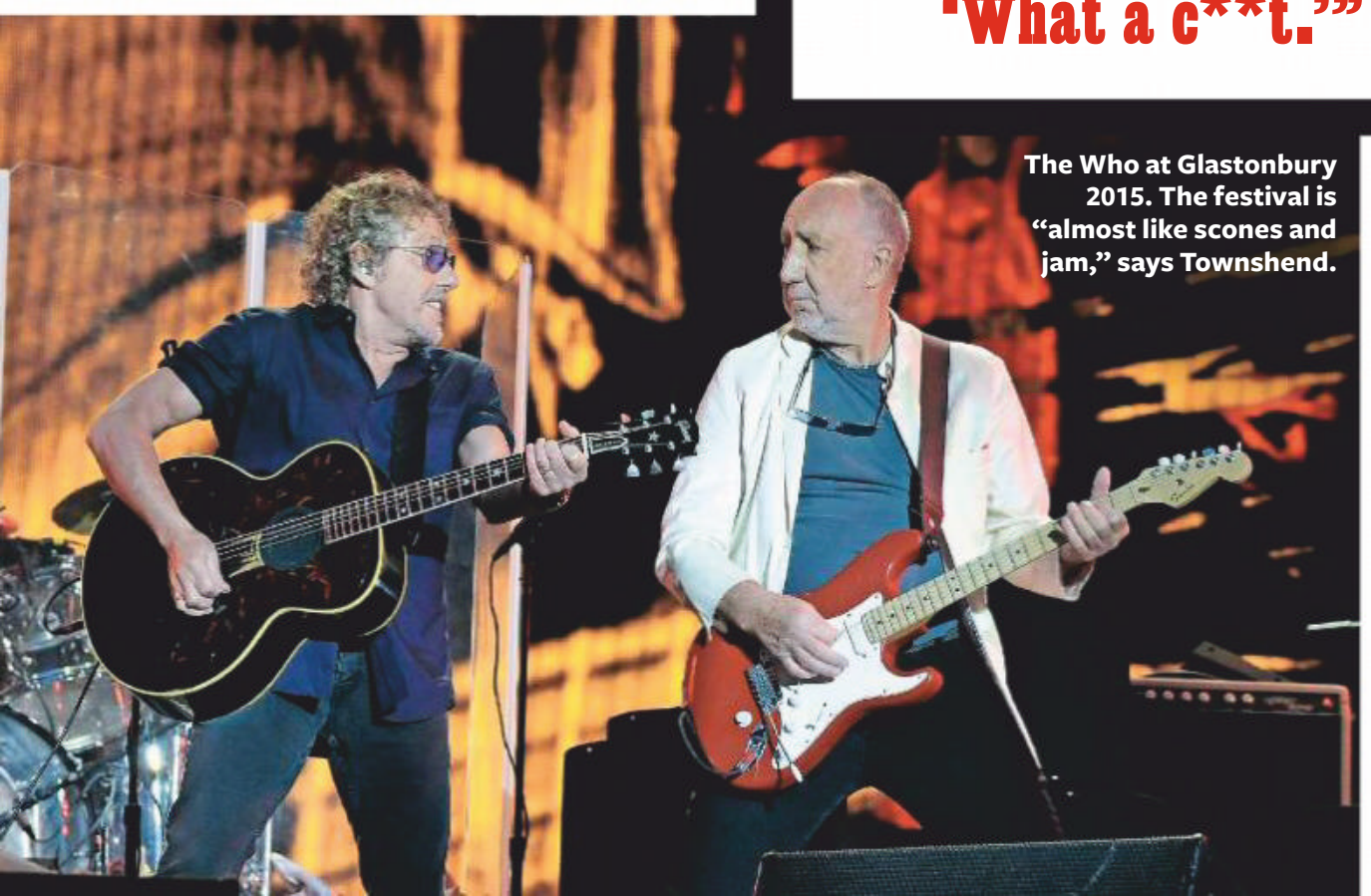
Facing forwards, The Who are back on the road, perhaps taking their final bows. Ever the high-conceptualist, Townshend has also written an opera to go with The Age Of Anxiety, due to be part of a travelling art installation that he has in development. "Which sounds pretentious," he acknowledges. "But when you go and see Muse or Beyoncé, it's all art installations these days."

As a disaffected teenager in the '60s, Pete Townshend picked up an electric guitar. But he can completely understand why today's kids would be more attracted to a synth or a laptop. So, in his opinion, is rock music dead?

He pauses, sips the last of his tea and then explodes with laughter.

"I don't give a fuck," he howls.

Really, you wouldn't expect any other answer. Q



The Who at Glastonbury 2015. The festival is "almost like scones and jam," says Townshend.

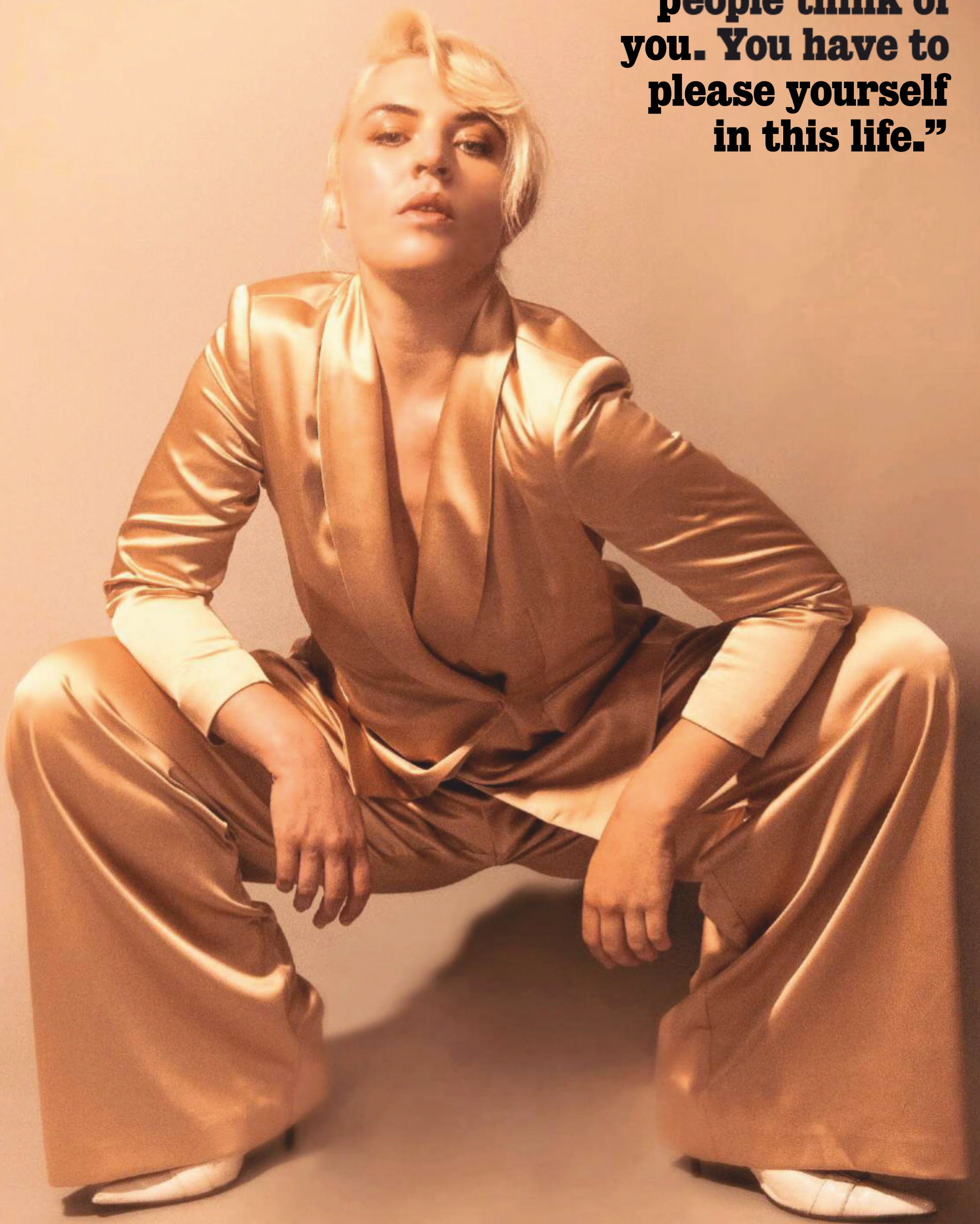
GETTY

PETE TOWNSHEND

“I don’t give a fuck”: Pete Townshend, 74, tells it like it is.

Going for gold: Self Esteem, aka Rebecca Taylor, lays down her life laws.

"It doesn't really matter what people think of you. You have to please yourself in this life."



10 Commandments

Self Esteem

Sheffield pop provocateur Rebecca Taylor shares her golden rules for living.

1 IF YOU'RE GONNA PISS YOURSELF, JUST PISS YOURSELF

I probably need to go to a doctor, but I so often need the toilet and, just recently, if I was panicking and I couldn't get to the toilet – and I live up three flights of stairs and the amount of times I've just been like, "Oh God, oh God, oh God!" – just let it flow, man. Put it in the wash, have a shower, it's all over, you're good. It's not as bad as everyone thinks. I've had 30 years of stressing about pissing my pants and it's really changed things up for me. I did a lot of pissing myself at Glastonbury. Just free pissing, which is fine. Shitting yourself is different.

2 IF YOU DON'T WANT TO GO, DON'T GO

This is something I've learnt over the years. I'm chronically empathic, I can't bear people being mad with me and that's the crux of what I'm trying to work out because that rules your life more than you realise. The amount of going to stuff I didn't want to go to in my 20s, and now I don't even say what I'm doing, I just say, "I've got plans," because then people can't pick back at that or suggest how you could work around it.

3 COMMUNICATE!

I've lost a lot of my life to not communicating, especially in creative settings. Generally, you have a right to your opinion and what you want for something. Setting out what you mean so there's no grey area will save you a lot of time and heartache.

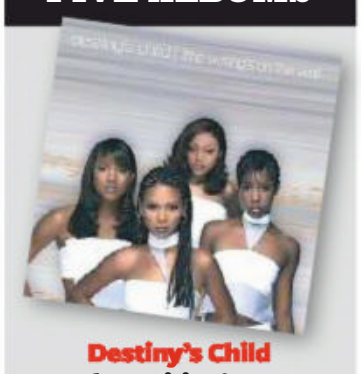
4 DON'T FOLLOW ANYONE ON THE INTERNET THAT TRIGGERS ANY SORT OF ENVY

I'm not someone who's like "social media has ruined our life, man!", I love it, but I had a crappy break-up and unfollowed everyone and I've done this over the years often where I can't have these triggers. I'm not saying social media is bad, but you don't have to follow someone back. It doesn't really matter what people think of you and you have to please yourself in this life.

5 BE AWARE THAT CONTINUOUS REJECTION AS A CHILD WILL MAKE YOU HORNY FOR SHITTY PEOPLE

A lot of people do it and it's usually women to men relationships where they are walked all over and forced to become different to who they are and for some reason that's like, "Phwoar, this is great, I love him!" I had a very bad one of that years ago and I've recently had another one where I dabbled back in it and was like, "This person is awful to me and makes me feel really shitty" but my body was going, "Phwoar! Yeah baby!" It's something in your brain that registers that as attraction. It's really quite depressing.

THOU SHALT COVET THESE FIVE ALBUMS



Destiny's Child
The Writing's On The Wall (1999)
"That was the first time I'd heard harmony like that. It's so long and there's too many things on it and no-one edited that shit, but I love it."

Neil Young
On The Beach (1974)
"No one ever seems to mention this Neil Young album but I think it's his most beautiful, concise record."

Perfume Genius
No Shape (2017)
"It's a fucking masterpiece. It's now got to the point where I can't listen to it cos it upsets me so much cos I love it so much."

Kanye West
My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy (2010)
"It's my number one everything, for ever. It informs everything I do, annoyingly."

The-Dream
Love King (2010)
"This was really instrumental in making me love R&B and pop. It's quite problematic now when you listen to it but it's brilliant, really brilliant in terms of pop."

6 ONLY SHAVE FOR YOU

The other day, someone I'm very close to was like, "Ooh, I really like this person, I might go over, but I haven't shaved my vagina." And I was like, "So fucking what!" I can't believe we're still in this situation where clever women are worried that men won't like their body hair. And I'm not even talking about growing your pits and burning your bra, it's just a choice for you, not for wider society.

7 YOUR PURPOSE IN LIFE WASN'T TO GET MARRIED AND HAVE A HOUSE AND KIDS

It's rammed down your throat, and up your arse, constantly that that's what happiness is, that that is what completing your life is. I'm not saying don't have kids, I'm saying you don't have to. I see a lot of people, men and women, crippled by this thing of, "Yeah, I'm doing well but I'm not in a relationship or I've not got a baby." Having it as the sole focus of why you're here has sent a lot of people mad for a long time.

8 SINGERS, WARM UP YOUR VOICE

I've finally started doing proper vocal warm-ups and you really notice the difference. It keeps happening in Self Esteem that I'm playing new band nights and obviously I'm an old dog around these like 16- or 17-year-olds who are so full of life. Recently, there was a young band in a shared dressing room and this girl came over as I was warming up, sitting on my own making weird noises, and she was like, "Ah, we're too embarrassed to do that, I've never heard anyone warm up."

9 SEXISM IS ALIVE AND WELL SO KEEP YOUR WITS ABOUT YOU

There's still men who don't realise you can't treat women as secondary any more. I did a panel called Songwriting For Girls and the whole angle I had was, "You guys are gonna be fine, you don't have to wade through the shit we had to" and then they all put their hands up, they'd all had experiences. The battle is not won. The fact that the conversation's here is great, but I would still say, "Be careful".

10 REMEMBER, YOU DON'T OWE ANYBODY ANYTHING

Women weren't put on the planet to serve men. If you're flirting with them and then you go on a date and you don't want to see them again, the vitriol you can get back is terrifying. I wrote about it a lot on the first album: you don't owe anybody getting drunk and sleeping with them anyway, you don't owe them texting back. You don't owe anybody anything.

WORDS: NIALL DOHERTY PHOTO: CHARLOTTE PATMORE

That Was The Year That Was

Welcome to the Q Awards 2019. We didn't stint on the stars, as everyone from The 1975 to Christine And The Queens and Kano to Kevin Rowland turned up to raise the roof and reflect upon their highs and lows of the past 12 months.

PORTRAITS: **ALEX LAKE**

"Come here often?"
The Q Awards open for business, Roundhouse, Camden, London, 16 October, 2019.

Q BEST TRACK *Presented by* Absolute Radio

SOMEONE YOU LOVED *by* LEWIS CAPALDI

PRESENTERS: **DAVE BERRY & CRAIG PARKINSON**

The Scottish motormouth looks back on a breakthrough year in which he became pals with Elton, wound up Noel, delighted Liam and had 2019's biggest hit.

Someone You Loved is Q's Best Track, it's the best-selling single of the year, it's Number 3 in America now and you're officially "America's sweetheart"...
It's true!
...So please tell me you *finally* think all this is real.
No! Honestly, it's not. I think it's happened because I'm on a label that's fucking good! I like my songs but I don't think they deserve to be as big as they are. I'm very pleased, but it's beyond *me*. It's weird, it doesn't feel like fucking me, it feels like the song belongs to someone else. And I just cover it.
You must be feeling famous, at least, by now though?
Oh totally! But it's how you react to it, 'cos it doesn't feel natural. Coming here, doing the red carpet, you feel famous but you also think, "Why d'you give a fuck!?" It's just *daft*. You hear photographers going, "Lewis, Lewis, look over here!" And I think, "There's loads o' pictures of me on the internet, just put one o' them in!" But it's funny.
And now you've met Elton. How did that happen?
Mr John. He got in touch through the head of Universal in the UK, "Can we meet for lunch?" It was the week of TRNSMT in July and I flew to his gaff in France – EasyJet! – and he was lovely. The afternoon dissolved, I was supposed to fly back earlier and he said, "Just stay the rest of the day". I changed my flight and it was just me and him showing each other tunes on his iPad. I mentioned I liked Joe Cocker, he was, "Have you heard this Joe Cocker song?" and I was, "Have you heard *[New Jersey singer-songwriter]* Donna Missal?" She's supporting me on tour next week, she's fucking unreal. It was just back and forth and I kept thinking, "This is stuff I do with my pals when we're in the car" and every time I looked up it's fucking Elton John. I asked him about Gerry Cinnamon and he was, "love Gerry Cinnamon", and I was, "How the fuck d'you know who Gerry Cinnamon is?!" He's just so plugged in, still has that love of music. When he's listening you can see it and that's how you should fucking feel about music. After all that time, it's music first.
David Hasselhoff knocked on your dressing-room door in America, too. Who would be the greatest person who could knock on your door next?
Paul McCartney.
And he'd say, "You look a bit like me when I was 20."
Fuckin' aye! Just no' as successful. So him or Bob Dylan. Elton was up there and now it's *happened*.
You also met Liam Gallagher. How was he?
Lovely! At Glastonbury. I'd just come offstage, my tour manager gets a text from Liam's tour manager, "Liam wants to meet Lewis". Fucking right! Walked over, he just strolls oot with his swagger and he goes, "I fookin' *love* how you wound our kid up." *[The great Noel Gallagher/Lewis Capaldi Twitter spat of summer 2019.]* Fucking aye! He was, "D'you want a lager? Are you staying around to get pished?" I was, "This is class!" I had a beer, he didn't, he was just about to go onstage and that's what was cool as fuck as well, 20 minutes before he went on he was, "Come on over." It was just fucking bang on, he was exactly how I wanted Liam Gallagher to be.

"We're in an exciting place..."

Line Of Duty actor Craig Parkinson presented the Best Track gong to Lewis Capaldi.

What record would you save from 2019?
Right now, at this exact moment, it would be Richard Dawson's 2020. I think it's an absolute work of genius. It's very fresh but it's like no other album I've heard in my life and his lyrics come from a place of complete truth. Look, it's been a fucking embarrassment of riches this year, we've been really lucky. We're in a really, really exciting place for music. *PAUL STOKES*

Big shots: (from left) Absolute Radio's Dave Berry, Capaldi and Craig Parkinson backstage at Camden's Roundhouse, 16 October, 2019.

OLIVER HALFIN

This year has been one of political mayhem in Britain. You've been away touring for most of it, what's the rest of the world saying about us?
"Yous are fucked, ain't yous!" They *are*, seriously. The Americans are all going, "Yous were laughing at *us*!? Now look at yous." Fucking right.

If you ruled the world, what would be in your manifesto?
Just... let c**ts get on with it. Leave people alone, let them do their thing. *Leave c**ts alone*.

Can your generation, and much younger, actually change the world?
Fucking right. I think the young now are more conscious of politics than they ever have been. Much more than me. Listen, I'm quite ignorant to a lot of stuff and it's my job to fucking change that. But 15-, 16-year-olds are so plugged in, know what's going on and know what they fucking want. Love Greta Thunberg, she's causing mayhem and she's not saying anything bad, she's just going, "Look, we'd need to fucking sort this oot. *Yous* can sort this oot. Let's sort it oot!" That's all she's saying. Class.

What's the one thing you'll always remember about 2019?
A Number 1 single. Number 1 album. Top 10 in America. No, I'll just remember playing the best gigs of my fucking life. No year will ever top this year in terms of getting to do the stuff I've done. Although there are some big gigs coming up! *[2020 UK arena shows.]* But it'll be all good.

Is the pressure to write another song as big as Someone You Loved colossal?
Totally! So you just grin and bear it, try and write a good tune and if it's no' as good or no' as big, fuck it. Just write songs you like and see what happens. If I'm aiming for a Number 1, the song's gonny be shite.

"It feels like the song belongs to someone else. And I just cover it."

What made you cry with laughter in 2019?
There's a video of a Scottish guy that gets stuck up on a roof, a roofer and his pals are taking the piss. And he loses his mind. It's so stupid, I was howling at it, hungover. Twitter's been class this year, good videos, good memes, love it.

Anything move you to proper tears?
Yesterday I watched Vinnie Jones talking about losing his missus. On the Piers Morgan thing, Good Morning Britain. Very moving, very brave, very class.

You're not on tour now til next week. Today you can get totally pished!
I'll be getting rat-arsed, for sure.
SYLVIA PATTERSON

You loved Someone...: Lewis Capaldi with his Best Track gong, voted for by Q readers.

“I got banned from Dubai for kissing a boy. I was a bit narky because I’d been given a list of limits on my expression.”
Matty Healy

World-beaters: The 1975 (from left, George Daniel, Ross MacDonald, Matty Healy, Adam Hann).

Q BEST ACT IN THE WORLD TODAY *Presented by* ROCK STEADY

THE 1975

PRESENTER: **CAITLIN MORAN**

They headlined Reading, got chased out of Dubai, collaborated with Greta Thunberg, prompted a Tory MP to write an angry letter and became one of the world's biggest groups. Matty Healy looks back on his band's momentous 2019.

Why are you the Best Act In The World Today?
I don't know if I am. If it was "best band", then yeah. There are lots of brilliant acts. There aren't lots of brilliant massive bands. It's not the age of four white guys in a band representing an idea. Our pantheon exists in hip-hop. To be alongside Stormzy, Simz, Kano, that's amazing. There are bands I like – Fontaines D.C., IDLES – but if you put us alongside the big festival headliners, there aren't really that many bands who are any good any more.

What day will you always remember from 2019?
Reading. Not just the show itself but the build-up, reflecting on being a teenager and the full-circleness of it. When I first saw the line-up, the yellow page with us at the top of it, I had a Pavlovian reaction. It's a part of my childhood. Reading was like my Christmas so it's like Christmas Featuring You. So the world *does* revolve around you!

What would you change about 2019?
We've definitely jeopardised the potential enjoyment of touring by doing it to the extent where all of our energy was being preserved for being onstage. Like any intense time in your life, I'm sure I'd like to have turned around and smelled the roses a little bit. I'm about to put out another record as well. I haven't given myself any time to be in this record. We're still working towards February 2020. It was going to be this year but it just wasn't finished.

People was a noisy curveball of a first single. Were you surprised that it was so well-received?
I've got to the stage now where I can't figure out what people want and if I try, it'll be wrong. So I'll write my most specific, impenetrable line and then it will be tattooed on the neck of a 15-year-old. So maybe being an artist is just what your gut is. It was cool to see so many people *not* being jarred by the change in genre.

Who's your hero of the year?
Oh, Greta Thunberg, without a shadow of a doubt. You can see her becoming the most famous thing on the planet.

She's bigger than most pop stars...
Oh, way more. There are people who are looking to her with a sense of purpose and then, because of how iconic she is, she's going to acquire this fame that's superficial, so if you combine those two things, it's lethal. There's an urgency to her that's really inspiring. Greta's speech was initially supposed to open the album but it felt like such a statement for now that it couldn't be sat on for six months.

What's made you angry this year?
What gets me pissed off is accusations of hypocrisy against climate activists. Who cares? To focus on the hypocrisy of an individual, which doesn't change the science or the situation, is an example of this quagmire we get ourselves in. We make things personal as opposed to doing something for the greater good. I've had it from politicians. *[Conservative MP]* David Davies, the weird one, posted about it. I didn't even respond, it was so pathetic.

What's the most rebellious thing you've done this year?
Well, I got banned from Dubai for kissing a boy, didn't I? I was a bit narky because I'd been given a list of limits on my expression. I was onstage, there was a young boy at the front – openly queer and therefore a brave boy in Dubai – with a sign saying: Can You Marry Me? So I said, "I can't marry you but I can hug you." So I went down and gave him a hug, to rapturous applause. As I moved away he asked for a kiss, so I gave him a kiss. It was a nice moment. Anyway, I came offstage, they're arresting the promoter, they're trying to rush me to the airport, I nearly get arrested. It's nonsense.

That's you done with Dubai, then?
Yeah, that's me done. I don't give a fuck.

Love It If We Made It was voted one of Q's Songs Of The Decade. Is there a rough draft that goes on listing things forever?
There's no recorded version but there are lots of notebooks. I started it in 2015 when the David Cameron and Ed Miliband election was going on.

So as the world got worse...
The song got way better. That's it.

What would you most like to change about the world?
Any society that doesn't put the empowerment of women at the forefront is destined to fail. I think the left need to step up when we talk about religion. It's difficult to be a woke, white liberal and try to get real human rights for people across the board and not get into situations where people call you a c**t. So I'm prepared for that.

What small things made you happy in 2019?
[Channel 4 sitcom] Stath Lets Flats. It's got so much heart. I find sincerity really important now. I like quite wholesome stuff. A lot of my friends have started having children so I've become a godfather to kids. I find it way easier being with kids than with adults.

What do you really want to do next year?
I'd love to do a soundtrack for a movie or a game. I'm writing a movie – it's absurdist in a Charlie Kaufman kind of way. It's about a guy who dies and comes back to life and nobody cares. *DORIAN LYNSKEY* »

Point made: Q's Best Act In The World Today The 1975 make their way to the stage.

JORDAN CURTIS HUGHES

A nod is as good as a wink: Caitlin Moran "loves the trick of The 1975".

"They present as a pop band but they are a rock band who bring politics into it."

Author and journalist Caitlin Moran on why The 1975 are the ultimate modern group.

How deserving are The 1975 of their award?
I'm a massive fan of The 1975, they are my favourite band of the last 10 years. They are not just a band but a whole world you can opt into and believe in. There are so many things I love about them: the fact they love their teenage fans. I grew up in Britpop and when all those huge bands became famous they were embarrassed by the fact they had teenage fans. These guys really understand that teenage girls are the best fans you can possibly have. I love the trick of them: they present as a pop band but they are a rock band who bring politics into it. Things like their environmental concerns: they are the first band I know to go plastic free on their CDs, they have a zero-carbon office, they recycle their merchandise. They put their money where their mouth is, too. They gave the profits of the Greta Thunberg single they did *[The 1975]* to Extinction Rebellion. Every time I hear that single it still reduces me to tears, that is the soundtrack to a dying civilisation. They are giving people a voice and a platform. It's interesting because Matty was telling me that since they stood up for Greta, they got so much more shit on social media. He was saying it was a big eye-opener for him. Just seeing a cool boy rock band align with teenage girls, women and this movement is a really beautiful thing.

If you could choose one song or album to be saved from 2019, what would it be?
People by The 1975. I didn't think they'd be able to top Love It If We Made It or I Always Wanna Die (Sometimes), so the fact they came up with this absolute scream... The idea of "people love people" is great when you look at what's going on at the moment and you ask, "Who is going to stand up for humanity?" It's so hard to say something simple in a beautiful way and The 1975 do that time after time.

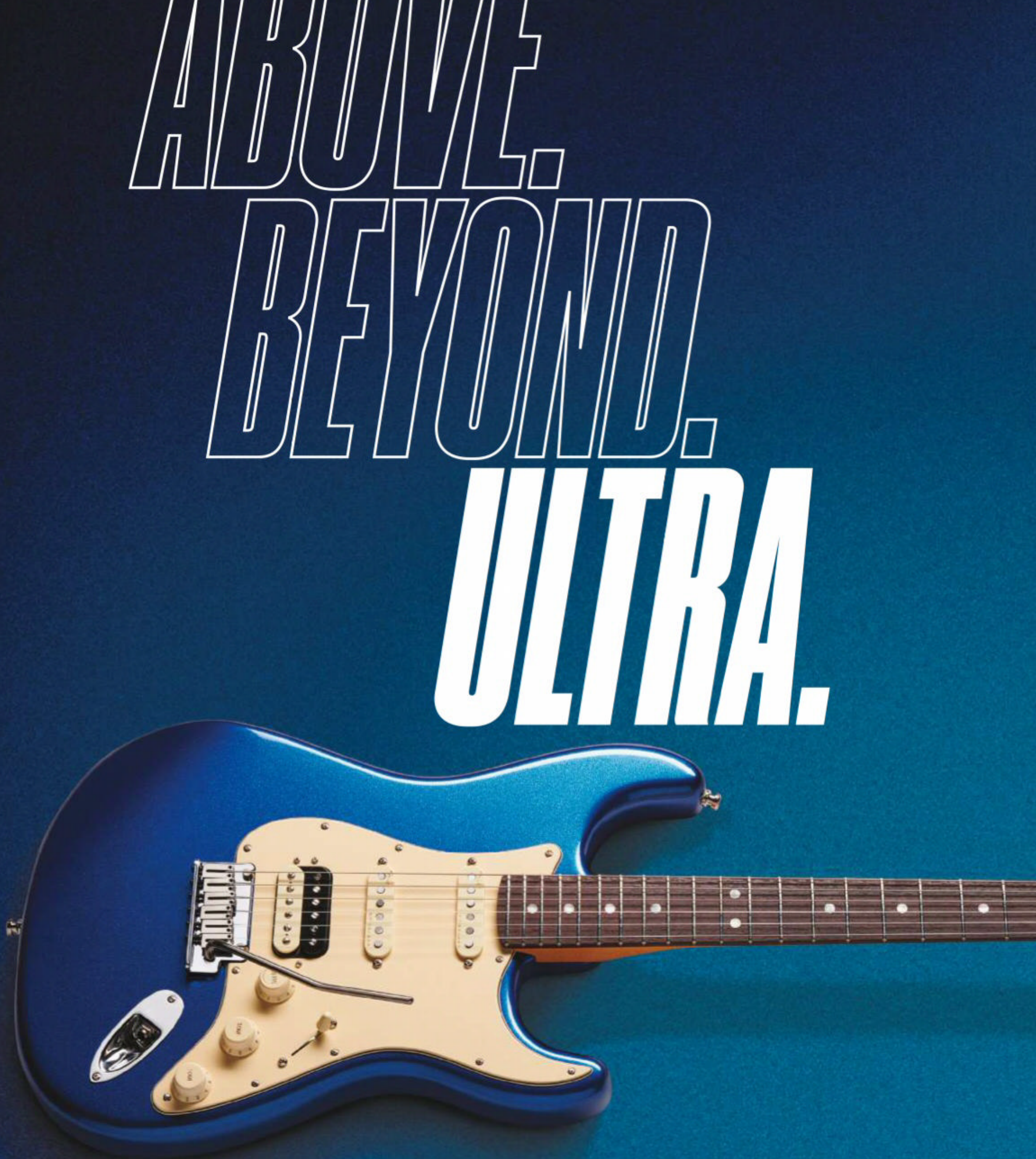
Have you been on any marches or got involved with any activism this year?
I was at the last Extinction Rebellion. What I was planning to do here, but I've maybe had too many gins to do it, was to go round to everyone and say, "Why don't we all go down to Extinction Rebellion and get arrested?" What would happen if the entire music industry got arrested in Trafalgar Square? So it depends if I sober up in the next 20 minutes. By the time this is printed you'll know if I did that or not. We might just go to the pub. We'll either save the world or carry on drinking, that's the Q Awards!

Who's your hero of the year?
Greta Thunberg. When I found out she was following me on Twitter, I felt both elated and crushed. Elated because she's amazing, she's a teenage girl trying to save the world, which beats every superhero movie ever made. But, on the other hand, most of the things I tweet are things like, "Richard Madeley is eating two baguettes at the same time on the Circle Line!" The idea that she's in the Atlantic Ocean, trying to get a signal and sees that has shamed me. She's making Twitter difficult for me at the moment.

Did you enjoy Nadine Shah hosting the awards?
When Nadine came onstage I was shitting myself for her. It's the hardest gig because most people just want to bitch, gossip and get pissed, but this could be her future. She was brilliant! She was really funny and gave a series of heartfelt speeches that were beautiful. She's my queen! *PAUL STOKES* »

Kindred spirits: The 1975 with award presenter/super fan Caitlin Moran.

ABOVE. BEYOND. ULTRA.



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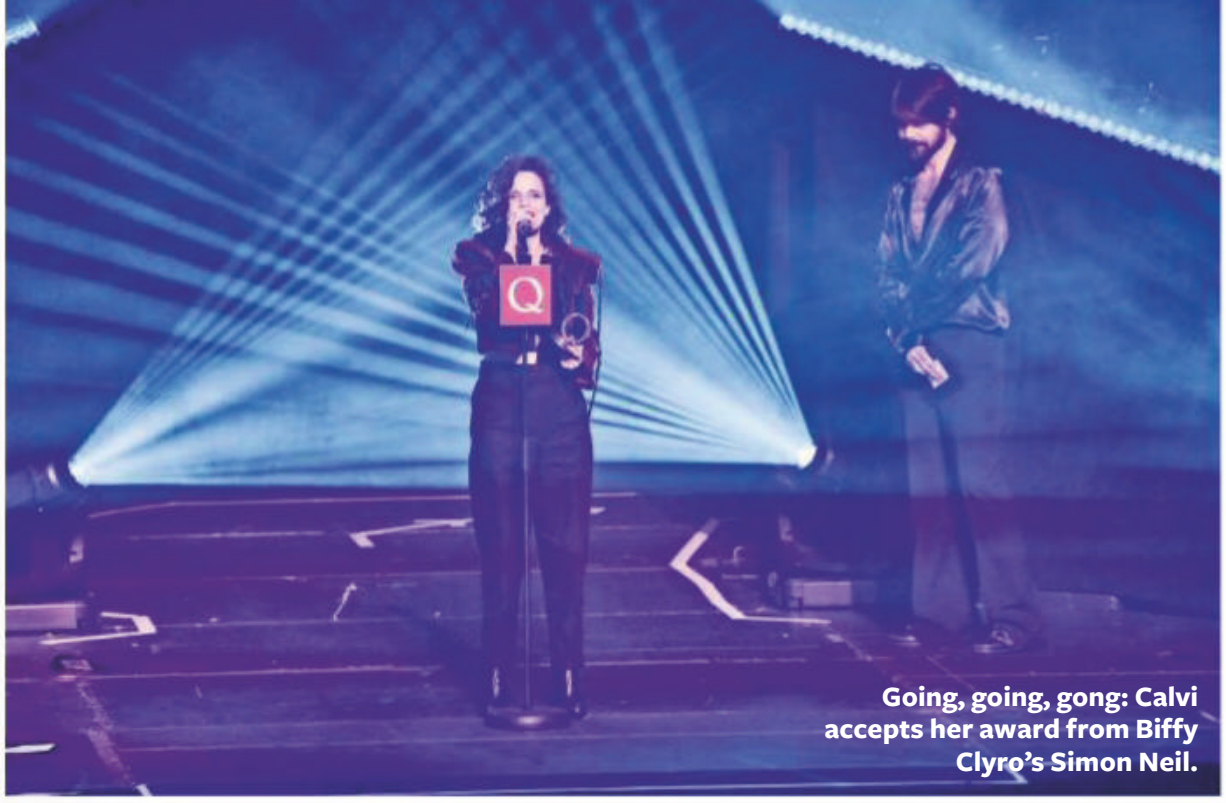
FENDER PLAY AWARD *Presented by* Fender PLAY™

ANNA CALVI

PRESENTER: **SIMON NEIL**

The winner of the award honouring modern guitar heroes on why the six-string is going through an inspirational phase.

Anna Calvi, winner of this year's Fender Play Award, with her trusty Telecaster.



Going, going, gong: Calvi accepts her award from Biffy Clyro's Simon Neil.

Congratulations on your Fender Play Award. Do you feel that the guitar is having a moment again? There's a lot of inventive stuff happening...
I just love playing the guitar. And though, obviously, there's a lot more electronic music around now than there used to be, I still think the guitar is still an amazing instrument to be expressive on. It can do so much. There are lots of inspiring guitarists at the moment. Courtney Barnett, St. Vincent, Blake Mills – they're all amazing.
The other day you were playing onstage with Richard Hawley, who's just over there. How was that?
It was so much fun. He's an incredible singer, too.
You both have a dramatic take on pop. Do you feel there's a kinship?
I do, yeah. I can sense where his inspiration comes from. I feel like we're on the same page.
You wrote the score to Season 5 of Peaky Blinders, and you've talked about the challenge of making music that explored the minds of the characters. What's it like inside Tommy Shelby's head?
It's pretty dark! There's vulnerability and violence in this weird combination that I find really interesting and I try to tap into. He kind of wants to be God, but he knows that he can't be. It's this ongoing existential crisis, which we all have to lesser extents – we can't be the God of our own worlds; we can't control everything that happens to us. But he's got that on another level.
What's the one thing you'll always remember about 2019?
I think it will probably be doing the Peaky Blinders soundtrack – it was such an incredible opportunity. It really opened some doors for me and I'd really like to do some more of that kind of work.

> **"Doing the Peaky Blinders soundtrack was such an incredible opportunity. It really opened doors for me."**

What would you change about 2019?
Boris Johnson?
It's been a year of activism. Have you been involved?
I read about it and I support it but I haven't managed to get out in it myself. I guess now I'm not touring I can get more involved.
On your last album, Hunter, Don't Beat The Girl Out Of My Boy felt like an anthem of non-binaryness. Do you think the conversation around that went in a positive direction this year?
Yes and no. I think that we're still giving space to transphobia in a way that's really appalling. It should be done and dusted, and we should feel ashamed that someone could still get on the news to talk about whether or not a trans woman is really a woman. So in a sense, I think we've only exposed how far we still have to come.
If you could take just one song or album away from 2019, what would it be?
I'm really enjoying the Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds record, Ghosteen. I think it's great to see how they're still taking risks. They could so easily have done a piano ballad record but they're still testing themselves. Nick's testing how high he can sing, and you can hear Warren *[Ellis]* exploring a new sonic world on synths. You can hear them pushing their own boundaries and after so many years in music it's so exciting to see that they still have a drive to go forward.
It's been a while since Hunter came out *[August 2018]*. What's next for you?
Just working on new material. I've got some exciting collaborations coming out soon that I can't announce yet.
And when might we hope to see a new album?
Ha! Well, hopefully it won't be five years like last time! *DANNY ECCLESTON*

"I go fucking radge when I'm recording..."

Biffy Clyro's Simon Neil passes on the Fender Play Award to a new winner.

You were the inaugural winner of the Fender Play Award. How has your year in guitars been? Bought any new ones?
Yeah, man! I've been in the studio all year so I've got myself another couple of Stratocasters and a beautiful Springsteen-esque Telecaster. Whenever I'm in recording mode, that's when I go fucking radge! I've been equipping myself to the max. How many guitars do I own? This is embarrassing; there are 18 in my house and they don't even get used – that's my retirement, that will pay for my old folks home. Then there are all the others for the studio and for touring.
Have you nearly finished the new LP?
We are two weeks away from finishing. It'll be out at the start of next year. You'll maybe hear a new song before the year is out.
Have you been on any marches or got involved with any activism this year?
No, I haven't, but I've really changed my lifestyle. Greta Thunberg and everyone have made me want to change how I live my life. I've stopped eating meat, I've changed my car – I've gone from petrol to electric. Is an electric car brave in Scotland? Too right! But as long as I'm drinking whisky I can survive.
If you could choose one song or album to be saved from 2019, what would it be?
There is this great record by *[Washington DC's]* Blacks' Myths – a jazz band who have put out their second LP, Blacks' Myths II. It's almost like noise rock, it really goes out there. It's like *[US noise rock duo]* Lightning Bolt and stuff. That's been really tickling me these last few months. *PAUL STOKES* »

"This'd make a cool medallion, Simon..."

Men (and women) in black: Pale Waves (from left, Charlie Wood, Heather Baron-Gracie, Ciara Doran, Hugo Silvani) with their Best Breakthrough Act gong.

Q BEST BREAKTHROUGH ACT *Presented by* Red Stripe

PALE WAVES

PRESENTER: **ROÍSÍN MURPHY**

The Manchester indie-pop quartet resolved to drink less in 2019. It didn't work out.

What's the one thing that stands out for you about 2019?

Ciara Doran (drums): I feel like everyone's taken more notice of climate change. It's the year it's become front-page news – finally! The summers are just getting hotter every year, the autumns wetter – apart from today. You just can't ignore it any more. We need to cut down on eating meat...

And cut down on flying, you people in bands...

Heather Baron-Gracie (vocals, guitar): Yeah, true – we flew back here from LA for this! This year, we played our biggest headline shows, which were amazing. Manchester Academy was the best, because Manchester has such a close place in our hearts because we started the band there. So to play the Academy was incredible.

And what's the one thing you would change about this year?

Baron-Gracie: I'm always a strong believer that everything happens for a reason. And once it happens, it's hard to look back and change it.

Doran: I regret falling in love! It didn't go well. It wasn't on tour, it was via Instagram and mutual friends.

Hugo Silvani (guitar): I'd change the amount of alcohol I've consumed.

Charlie Wood (bass): We're currently drinking Champagne at three in the afternoon. But that's almost breakfast, right?

Who is your hero or heroine of the year?

Doran: AOC: *[American congresswoman]* Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. She's a very strong voice for our generation and we need to listen to her.

Baron-Gracie: Robert Smith. I admire how long he's been going and the fact that he's stayed true to his fashion sense and image. He's like, "Fuck it, this is who I am as an artist." I will always admire him for that.

Silvani: Greta Thunberg. She started out sitting on her own, outside the Swedish parliament. And now look what this one young person has done.

What's been the most astonishing thing you've seen in 2019?

Baron-Gracie: I saw two naked men the other day – just walking along the road in San Francisco. And on one of them's penis, he had a little tiny... like, sprinkly disco ball... on a sock... My dad couldn't believe it. My whole family were there!

Did you make any resolutions for 2019, and did you keep them?

Doran: I resolved to drink less. That didn't work out.

Baron-Gracie: But last year was worse: we were alcoholics. And I tried to give up chocolate. Went two days, then was banging into the Cadbury's Dairy Milk.

If there was one album, or single, or track from this year that you could save, what would it be?

Baron-Gracie: MUNA's Saves The World LP. They're three queer girls from LA – everything about them is interesting. And Harry Styles picked them to support him.

Silvani: I love Taylor Swift's album. Oh! There's actually so many bangers on that.

What percentage of your second album is completed?

Baron-Gracie: We've got about 25 new songs, but we're still writing.

Silvani: Heather's been in LA the past few weeks, in writing sessions. There's enough songs, but you've always got to be writing.

What are your hopes for 2020?

Baron-Gracie: To make a great album. And to be taken more seriously.

Wood: I want a house. We all live together in London but we're getting booted out because, well, these guys are too rowdy. I'm sweet as a nut, just chilling in my room.

Let's put an "accommodation wanted" alert in Q: dream-goth band from Manchester seeks home?

Baron-Gracie: Yeah, big house, four bedrooms, in London. *CRAIG McLEAN*

"There has been some fantastic new stuff this year" says Best Breakthrough Act presenter Roísín Murphy. Including her own single!

"I've got a thing, it's not special, it's just a thing, I just know what's round the corner."

Pop's own Mystic Meg Roisin Murphy will tell you your future now.

If you could choose one song or album to be saved from 2019, what would it be?

There has been some fantastic new stuff this year. I always find this question so important I don't want to get it wrong. So I'll say Incapable is the best song I heard this year. It's by me. Why is it the best? It's just the best on every level, mate.

What's the one thing you will always remember about 2019?

I started working with this wonderful lady Rhianna who is my new manager. She used to be my backing singer! She was an artist in her own right, put out on Sony, then she became a backing singer, she was one of two I had on the Overpowered Tour and became a very close friend. She then moved into this side of things and now I've got a manager who is someone who I'd like to spend time with, which is quite amazing.

Did you have any good vintage finds this year?

Yeah, always! I always get good things in a shop in Relik which is right beside Trellick Tower. There are some in Soho I like but they've got moody owners. You ask if they'll give you a deal and they get arsey with you, so I'm like: "Give me a deal! I'm walking out of the shop otherwise, I need a deal more than I want the thing."

The artist JMW Turner is on the back of the new £20 note. Who would you like to see on your money?

I like to see that *[flips Q the finger]* on the 20 pound note! I don't want to see anyone on the note. My dog Charlie would look good on it though.

Where were you when England won the cricket world cup?

Fuck, I don't know, but I do remember it was quite enjoyable for people. My keyboard player and musical director Eddie Stevens is peculiarly interested in cricket. He used to wear an umpire outfit quite often when he was playing the Hammond organ in Moloko. And, of course, Eoin Morgan the England captain is Irish, which is fantastic!

You're a member of the Brutalism Appreciation Society. Brutalism seems to be having a bit of a moment again in both architecture and popular culture. Are you surprised?

No, no. Obviously everything I get into is fashionable after I get into it. I've got a thing, it's not special, it's just a thing, I just know what's round the corner.

So what's the next big thing?

In everything there is a level of despair at the moment, in every part of the arts, because the arts have proved themselves to be so much less virile and affecting then they thought they were. So I can't imagine a new idea of Utopia developing any time soon and you don't have new waves of architecture without that. So what is next? Everything is less-is-more now: less consumption will affect every part of life aesthetically as well.

PAUL STOKES

»

Q AWARDS 2019 IN ASSOCIATION WITH Absolute Radio

Q BEST SOLO ARTIST

STORMZY

PRESENTER: **BOBBY GILLESPIE**

The only person in the world who thought his Glastonbury set was rubbish (he came round) looks back on a victorious year.

"Halfway through watching Glastonbury back, I was like, 'Shit, I think it all went alright.'" Stormzy onstage at Glasto 2019.

"When I walked offstage at Glastonbury, I thought it was the worst thing I'd ever done."

What's the one thing you'll always remember about 2019?
Glastonbury, definitely.
What was going through your head when you were up on that stage?
The thing about Glasto, and I've not told anybody this, but I had no sound. My in-ears blew after about 20 minutes, so I had no sound for the whole thing. It was the most difficult thing I've ever done.
It certainly turned out alright, though. You must have known that when you walked offstage?
No, no. When I walked offstage, I thought I'd fucked it. I thought it was the worst thing I'd ever done. I came offstage and thought I'd totally, absolutely blown it. I was crying for, like, an hour. I was in hysterics. I thought I'd fucked it up. Heartbroken, man. Heartbroken. Then after calming down for an hour, some of the people at the festival, *[co-organiser]* Emily Eavis and that, gave us a memory stick to watch it back. And I got about halfway through and I was, like, "Shit, I think it all went alright."
Everybody has said how significant that show was. But why was it significant for you personally?
It was significant cos it was everything. I thought my first album was everything, but with Glasto, that felt like the absolute summary and epitome of everything. It felt like the defining moment of my career. It felt like everything I stand for, all my music, every moment, everything, all in one performance. It felt it was like my big finale.
You also ended up on the cover of *Time* magazine this month...
That was a super surprise, man. Did not see that coming.
Have you got a framed cover hanging in your toilet?
Nah, I haven't even got a copy yet. I need to get hold of it.
You recently said, "I want to be Prime Minister." If there was a General Election tomorrow, you'd win it. Are you going to run?
Oh nah, nah, nah, nah, nah! That's not on the cards for me. I'm gonna stick to being a musician. That's what I'm best at.
What's the best thing that you've heard all year?
Do you know what? The greatest song I've heard this year, but it's from 2013, is a song by Blood Orange called Chosen. I only heard it this year. It's like I've been in a time chamber. It's like the greatest song I've ever heard, but I only heard it this year, so I got there a bit late. I've got another six years of catching up to do.
Who's the most famous person you've been in a room with this year?
Jay-Z and Beyoncé.
How did that conversation go?
It was the greatest conversation of my life. One day I'll reveal it. One day we'll talk about it. It's what I started my Glasto performance with, a clip of it.
Can we expect a collaboration between the three of you?
I don't know about that. They're very busy people. But God willing.
If you could change one thing about this year, what would it be?
Nothing, man. I'm a strong believer in "it all happens for a reason."
Should I go down the bookies and put 20 quid on there being a new Stormzy album next year?
You'd lose money, mate.
When's it coming out?
2019. The year is still young.
What's it called?
I can't say that.
Can you pretend you're playing charades and mime it?
Naaaaah, but the clues are out there. Anyone who's looked will know.

DAVE EVERLEY

Crowned: Stormzy picks up his Q award.

CARSTEN WINDHORST, GETTY

On cloud nine: Stormzy with his Q Best Solo Artist award.

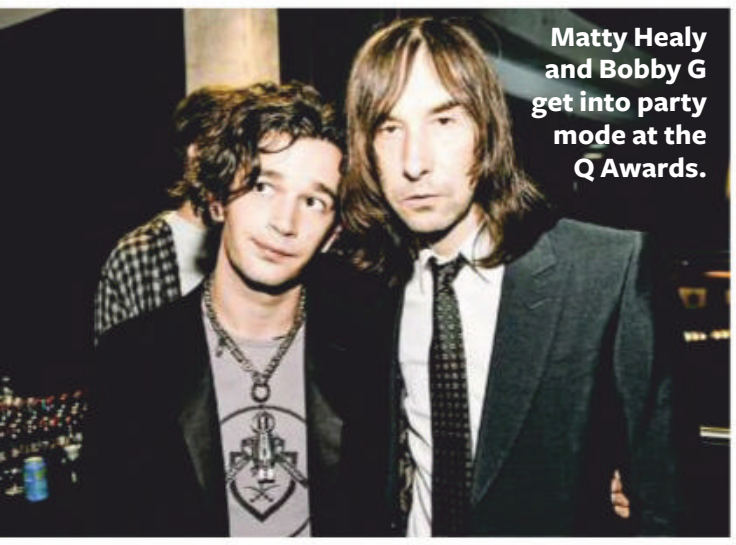
"Really, more power to him." Best Solo Artist presenter Bobby Gillespie and winner Stormzy.

"It's great that these guys are expressing themselves."

Primal Scream frontman Bobby Gillespie, who gave an inspiring speech before handing Stormzy his award, on why rap and grime are 2019's most relevant musical movements.

You had the whole place going with your speech.
I think culturally what all of those guys are doing, the whole scene, is amazing. My sons are teenagers, and all they listen to is rap and grime – they don't really listen to white rock music. I think it's great that these guys are expressing themselves. Like I said in my speech, they are the sound of British youth from the council estates, whereas rock music now is just middle to upper-middle class. No disrespect to them, but we've heard that story. You need more voices to be heard, so culturally I think they're important, and these guys are big.

And with Stormzy's Cambridge University scholarship scheme he's overturning the system of class/race privilege established over centuries...



Matty Healy and Bobby G get into party mode at the Q Awards.

Aye, it's brilliant that he's doing that, putting something back in. Really, more power to him. Tricky is a hero too, and Kevin Rowland. I know Kevin as a friend, but I still listen to the first Dexys album a lot. It's great to see him tonight wearing beautiful pink. It's very Gene Vincent *['50s rock'n'roller]*. He looks good. I complimented him, and he was totally into that. One time I said to him, "Do you like Gene Vincent?", and he goes, "I always loved him – I always wanted to have a band that looked as great as The Blue Caps, but I never had one" – that was at eight in the morning after a festival back in the day.

Have you been talking to any of the younger fraternity?
Aye! My kids love going to gigs. My youngest has been to see slowthai, and Dave, and it's exciting for him. He's in the moshpit and it's high energy music. I'm not gonna say it's like punk, but young kids are getting off on it. They like a lot of American rap, and the eldest one likes drill – and the things they liked last year, they don't like this year, they move on.

Who are your heroes of 2019?
Hmm, I dunno, I'm a bit fazed actually after giving that speech! It was quite intense. I know – the post office workers who've just unanimously voted to go on strike – they're heroes. In music, I saw Alice Cooper sing I'm Eighteen the other night, that was fantastic, great hard rock! His voice is still amazing. There's been some great records this year. I really like Better Than Stoned by this American band called Twin Peaks, it's a lovely Ronnie Lane/Faces style ballad. There was this great contemporary roots-dub record – Sounds Almighty by Nat Birchall Meets Al Breadwinner Featuring Vin Gordon. Then, Peter Perrett's Human World – I'll always love him. I like a couple of tracks by Fat White Family – Feet and Tastes Good With The Money. Got to mention Venice Bitch by Lana Del Rey, too.

What would you change about this year?
I'd change the Conservative government. It'd be great to have the chance. Let's see: about my heroes... *ANDREW PERRY*

JORDAN CURTIS HUGHES

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KANO

In a parallel universe, the winner of Q's Outstanding Contribution To Music award says he would just be coming to the end of his football career. Over the page, Rupert Howe charts the rise of grime's most enigmatic figure.

PRESENTER: **AKALA**

What's been the highlight of 2019?
Probably the last fucking week. I played the Royal Albert Hall, so I can't really look past that. Playing there has been a dream of mine, but I'm glad I enjoyed it in the moment because I couldn't remember it the day after. I started looking back at pictures and it was weird because I was looking at it like a viewer – I couldn't remember it happening.

Did you have any resolutions at the start of the year and did you stick to them?
I did a vegetarian January and then was a pescatarian for the rest of the year. I stuck to it. I can cook. What's my speciality? At the moment, salmon. If you ever speak to Lethal Bizzle, ask him about the salmon. I can't talk too much about it, but fucking hell, I've got a special thing going on.

Anything you'd change from this year?
The last car I got was a two-year deal and now I wish it was one-year because I want an electric car. I'm more conscious about that stuff now. Maybe next year.

Have you become more environmentally aware over the last year?
On tour we don't use plastic water bottles; that's something I've implemented this time, but everybody has to do their own little bit. I stopped eating beef a few years ago for environmental reasons. I'm not trying to preach to everyone, though.

Have you been on any political marches this year?
No, I haven't but I should do. Extinction Rebellion? I'm with the cause, a lot of people are against the methods, but in 100 years' time when we're no longer here, those people aren't going to be thinking about the time their great gran was late for work because someone was standing in front of a bus. That's all going to be insignificant. They're fighting for a bigger cause that I actually believe in.

You've been vocal on issues such as knife crime in the past. Do you feel obliged to speak out?
Not really. I'm careful about jumping on those topics. I speak about what I care about and I care about the area I come from. I can't lie: there are a lot of issues in those areas, a lot of violence. There are a lot of great things too that I want to highlight. But I can't shy away from the fact that a lot of things are going on. I'm in a position to speak about it without someone saying, "What the fuck do you know? You're not from here..." It's about opening a dialogue and having a conversation.

What's been the most astonishing thing you've seen this year?
Liverpool winning the Champions League! I didn't go, I watched it on TV. The final was terrible but the quarter-finals and the semis? That was some of the best football I've ever seen.

Turn for Kano feature

You played youth team football for Chelsea, West Ham and Norwich. Do you ever regret not sticking it out?
No, not really. I'd probably be retiring soon. I'm 34 so I'd be seeing who fancied me from the lower leagues, or if someone wanted me in China. It would be that kinda vibe. I might have had more money in the bank, but I don't regret it.

The return of Top Boy was a huge thing this year. Do you enjoy acting?
I wouldn't say "enjoy", but in terms of this project, I just believe in it so much. I go through the bullshit because I hope that the final product would be something impactful. And I believe it was. Would I do it again? Maybe, at some point. I don't know if I'll be rapping in 20 years' time, but there's no age limit to acting. *MATT ALLEN*

Kano: Q's Outstanding Contribution To Music winner is also a dab hand at cooking salmon.

“Early on, when people called me a grime MC, I wasn’t happy about it. I didn’t want a genre to define me.”

Pull up a chair: Kano faces the music, East London, August 2019.

Asked to consider how others see him, grime don Kano is under no illusions. "A bit dark, a bit moody," he says with just the trace of a sigh. "People are like, 'You're never happy!' Is it because of my face? I never smile that much. But, nah, I'm happy inside." He pauses for a beat. "Sometimes."

Sat high up in the arches of a Shoreditch photographic studio, trains rumbling overhead, Kane Robinson lets out a long chuckle. As a long-time hero on the grime scene and iconic figure in black British music, he's used to tackling other people's preconceptions. Even if his slightly shy demeanour and dry, self-deprecating wit suggests he never expected to find himself in such an elevated position. Away from the cameras and studio lights, he says, he's just a normal bloke from the East End.

"When I haven't got music out I'm not really a big social guy, turning up everywhere and whatnot," he says. "I just like a quiet life, to be honest."

There's no chance of that just now. What with his recent zeitgeist-channelling album Hoodies All Summer swiftly followed by a new series of Top Boy, the former Channel 4 drama that's become a Drake-endorsed hit for Netflix, in which Kano stars as brooding menace to society Sully. Then there's the tour rehearsals, video shoots, interviews. Now 34, he laughs that 15 years ago he'd probably have turned up today in the company of a large entourage intent on loudly celebrating his success. Today it's just him, soberly dressed head-to-toe in black with a pair of £500 Balenciaga trainers the only sign of how his status has risen.

"I remember them days when my mates were so interested in this new world," he says. "But now they don't want to come down to Shoreditch on a Friday morning to watch me talk to you and take some photos! At the beginning it was always a plus-10 on the guest list. Not so much now."

With grime currently the ruling sound of young Britain, it's easy to forget that when Kano arrived on the scene it was almost on its way out. Dizzee Rascal's Mercury Prize win in 2003 had helped elevate grime from the streets to the mainstream. But by 2006 concerns about gang feuds and fights at club nights (even The Guardian ran a story titled "Is violence holding grime back?") threatened to send the next generation of MCs and producers back underground.

By that point Kano was already a star-in-waiting with a Top 40 album, Home Sweet Home, to his name. Tracks such as Ghetto Kid still referenced knives and 9mm firearms, but he'd gained a reputation as grime's most versatile MC, as eager to rhyme over Typical Me's rock guitars as he was to go head-to-head with Mike Skinner on Nite Nite's sugar-coated R&B. True, Skinner was his boss, having signed Kano to Warner-backed label 679. But Kano still cites him as "a massive influence, an inspiration". When The Streets played Brixton Academy on a recent tour, Skinner invited Kano onstage to perform the remix version of Fit And You Know It.

"That was the first video I ever did," he laughs. "It was on *[early grime TV channel]* Channel U, which was massive at the time. After that everyone knew me in the area."

Respect on the street didn't always translate into sales, though. The stylistically

"It's about an attitude..." says Kano of new album, Hoodies All Summer (above).

diverse albums that followed Home Sweet Home frequently divided opinion, but their willingness to collide indie guitars, EDM beats and grime attitude meant they sounded like no one else. "I always made it my mission to make what I loved and not be pigeon-holed or boxed off," he shrugs. "Early on when people called me a grime MC I wasn't happy about it. It was like, 'I'm not just that.' I didn't want a genre to define me. I just wanted to be respected as an artist. Now I think people appreciate the breadth of music I make." »

Addressing youth violence in the 2019 promo for Trouble/Class Of Deja.

ALEX LAKE

With Ashley "Asher D" Walters in Netflix hit drama Top Boy.

ALEX LAKE, NETFLIX

Compared to the supersize presence of grime 2.0 stars such as Stormzy and Skepta, Kano often cuts a more enigmatic figure, darting in and out of the limelight like the Mortal Kombat character who earned him his nickname at school. But while new album Hoodies All Summer retains that agility, it's also his most expansive, outward-looking statement yet, connecting his grime roots with the global sounds of modern London, from Pan-Fried's jubilant take on Afrobeats, featuring rising star Kojo Funds, to the dancehall riddim of Can't Hold We Down, recorded with Jamaican deejay Popcaan.

"I'd met him a few times here when he was doing Gorillaz and we always talked about working," he says. "But it was mad the way it happened. My mum was in Jamaica for her 60th birthday and I went out there and had two extra days after she left. He took us to some street parties, crazy places, and then late one evening said, 'We should go to the studio!' So yeah, why not?! It was nice to catch that vibe with him over there. The dancehall thing is so a part of me."

To Kano, the range of styles featured on Hoodies All Summer is something "only a young person in England could wear." After the very personal landscape mapped out on 2016's Made In The Manor, which was packed with references to his East London roots, right down to street names and barber shops, musically he's ready to embrace the world. It's in the lyrics that he remains conflicted. Even the album's title is a reference to feelings of doubt and alienation.

"That came from a line in *[the song]* Teardrops: 'When it rains it pours, hoodies all summer, because teardrops from the sky only seem to fall on you and I.' It's about an attitude, a mentality, a resilience. We know we always get shitted on, but we're prepared," he says. "On *[Made In The Manor]* I gave so much of myself, afterwards it was like, 'What more can I say?' But the more I thought about it, this album wasn't so much about me. It's about us as a generation, a community, a city, a country."

Earlier this year he uploaded a 17-minute short film to YouTube that met some of those issues head-on. Using new songs Trouble and Class Of Deja as the soundtrack, the film presents a teenager's murder as a kind of modern morality tale in which a family's grief is shared by the wider community at a celebratory house party – Trouble's gospel soul giving way to Class Of Deja's restless, garage-powered urgency as Kano shares a mic with fellow old-school MCs D Double E and Ghetts.

"It's a celebration of life. That's what happens in West Indian culture. That's how our funerals look. If you turn up at 8pm you'd never know someone died," he says, adding that it's about making the most of life, even in perilous situations. "Sometimes when you feel you're not given much, you haven't got much opportunity, you're not given the tools or even the vision to see the world as this wider place, everything feels so claustrophobic. But you find the beauty within that and that gives an ownership of the ends.

"Thanks, mate." Kano with Outstanding Contribution... presenter Akala.

"Kano's music has grown with him. It's that evolution I'm so proud of."

Rapper, activist and author Akala on taking a break from writing his novel to salute an artist he views as a poet.

Did Kano deserve to win today?
One hundred thousand million per cent! What I like is that we've arrived at a point within UK hip-hop and grime culture where an artist like Kano *wants* to be an artist, to be musical, to work with a massive live band, to make short films for his singles – to be able to do, creatively, all of these things and be able to be where he's at in the industry. He is a poet – that's where it begins, this ability to manipulate words and, because of his grounding in the history of MC'ing, his flow on the beat. And his music's grown with him – he's not trying to make the same kind of music as he did when he was 19. It's that evolution I'm so proud of, first as a fan, because we weren't friends growing up. I'm not from the same area; we've only become friends over the last few years.

Have you been involved in any activism this year?
No comment! I'm not gonna say. Not everything's for Twitter.

What should we do in the face of all the madness?
You do what you can to the best of your abilities with as much integrity as you personally have. But we're all flawed, we're just trying to get through this life without punching anyone in the teeth. It can feel selfish to just get your own house in order, in a world with so much suffering, but if it isn't, how can you help put anyone else's house in order?

What's the one thing you will always remember about 2019?
To be honest, I've been hunkered down – I've just finished a new novel. I've been in the world of Elizabethan London 500 years ago. The hero is a young lad called Henry, who is a genius and a thief. I can't say much more.

Who's your hero of the year?
You know, I saw that the President of Ethiopia *[Abiy Ahmed]* won the Nobel Peace Prize and I was appalled at my own ignorance about that, as a Pan-Africanist. So, I've asked some of my Ethiopian friends, "Is he the real deal?" A few said, "Yes, he helped bring the war to an end." I don't want to say him, but it made me realise I hadn't done enough research.

If you could save one song or album from 2019, what would it be?
Kano's, come on!

IAN HARRISON

Where we are becomes who we are."

It's a heartfelt statement, but surely he was wary of speaking out on what's one of the most emotive issues facing British urban youth?

"There's not anything I'm afraid to speak about," he asserts. "I'm not ambitious enough to think a piece of music is going to stop anything. It's not. I'm not coming with the answers. I'm not like, 'Everybody, put down the weapons.' It's more trying to get into the mindset of people who feel they have to live like that and how sad that is."

These days Kano lives with his partner in suburban Essex, but through friends and family still maintains a connection with the East London "ends", in particular the area around St Olave's Road in E6 where he lived as a teenager with his mother, a PE teacher, and older brother. Back then, it was Kano's quick footwork rather than his way with words that kept him off the streets. A promising footballer who played up front for Chelsea's youth team, he didn't wake up to music until his brother bought a pair of turntables and Kano began MCing over his garage mixes.

"I saw Dave the other day and he was like, 'I heard from a good source you're probably the best footballer in the scene!'" He laughs. "When I was young, football was something I was good at, but it wasn't my passion. It gave me a focus and got me active, but when music came along it was like, 'This is who I am.'"

His mum insisted he stay on at school and finish his A-levels, but from the age of 15 all Kano's spare time was spent making beats on his PC and practising rhymes to perform on pirate radio station Deja Vu. Initially influenced by US rappers such as Nas and Jay-Z, he says intense competition from local MCs honed his instantly recognisable »

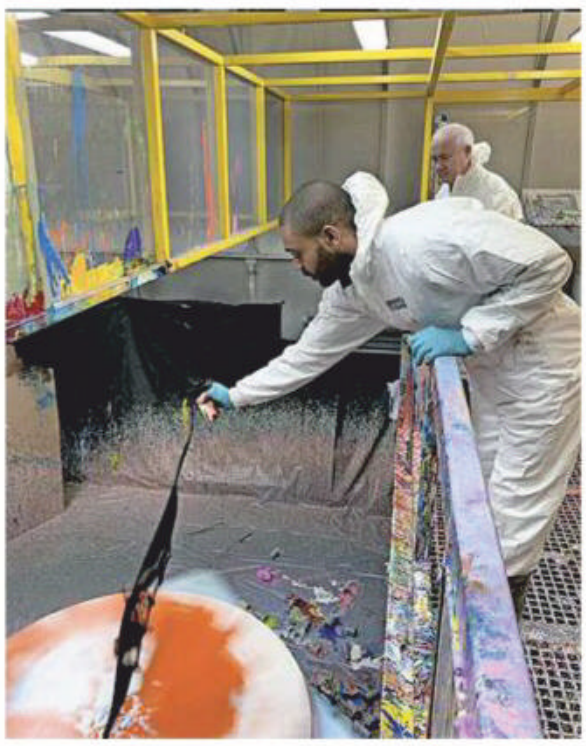
“Sometimes me and Damon play table tennis. He’s up in wins. But I beat him last time. It’s all about your last victory.”

quick-slow rhyme style and clever wordplay.

“It wasn’t until DVDs came along that people could put a face to the name, so *[on radio]* having a distinctive voice was really important,” he says. “Your voice is your voice, but how you twist it, that was always interesting to me. How you speed things up and slow them down.”

By way of example, he raps the opening lines to 2004’s breakthrough single Ps & Qs. Released following a brief stint in local grime group N.A.S.T.Y. Crew alongside D Double E, it plays rapid-fire bars off against a sinuous “When Kano comes to town...” refrain. “That flow was something I spent God knows how many hours on,” he says. “I remember Ghetts used to come to my house on a Saturday and we’d get our notebooks out to write lyrics like we were in class or something! It was writing just for writing’s sake. That never happens now.”

Ps & Qs helped take Kano up a division, but like every newly promoted success story the problem was staying up. Following Home Sweet Home and its even more wide-ranging follow-up London Town, he left 679 and released two albums on his own label to steadily diminishing critical and commercial response. When 2010’s patchy Method To The Maadness only just scraped into the Top 50 he was offered a lifeline by sometime collaborator Damon Albarn,



ALEX LAKE, THEREALKANO@INSTAGRAM

“It was sick!”: Kano tries his hand at a spot of spin painting with Damien Hirst (rear).

a guest verse on the Gorillaz track White Flag leading to an invitation to join the Escape To Plastic Beach Tour – a 37-date global odyssey that took Kano across America, Europe and Australia.

“To be on that tour and see *[Damon]* work really grew me as a person, even more than making music,” he admits. “Are we still in touch? Yeah, of course. Sometimes I’ll go over and play him stuff. Sometimes we’ll just catch up and play table tennis. In terms of our games from the beginning to now, he’s probably up in wins. But I beat him last time. It’s all about your last victory!”

Post-Gorillaz, Kano admits grime’s renaissance circa 2015 felt like “a second chance”. Made In The Manor was a bold return, but there’s a sense of renewed vitality to Hoodies All Summer. Largely recorded at The Kinks’ Konk Studios in Hornsey (“Ray Davies still owns it – he floats about in there sometimes...”), Kano would spend days bouncing musical ideas off producers Jodi Milliner and Blue May. Once they’d nailed the backing tracks, he took the demos home and recorded verses straight into his phone. Inspiration usually came in the evenings, but to overcome one period of writer’s block he ended up decamping to a friend’s house in the countryside – not the most obvious inspiration for hard-edged grime lyrics.

“No,” he admits. “But there’s something about removing yourself from the city that allows you to observe things better than actually being in the mix.”

Lunchtime is approaching and it feels as if Top Boy remains the elephant-shaped presence in the room. When Kano joined Channel 4’s hard-boiled urban drama in 2011 it seemed likely to be a temporary interruption to his music career. Even more so when Channel 4 dropped the series just three years later. Then long-time fan Drake stepped in offering to pitch the show to Netflix and 18 months on Kano’s rebooted performance is now being shown to 150 million subscribers around the world.

Looking beyond: "I'm always aspiring to that next level" – Kano, 2019.

"It's a bit of a big thing," he muses, with characteristic understatement. "But I've been conscious of not getting it mixed up with the music. I want to be respected as a music artist and as an actor, not respected for one because of the other. Hopefully both pieces of work will speak for themselves."

Still, there's the Drake effect to consider. The Canadian star has kept a protective eye on production and met with the lead actors on a number of occasions, but Kano is sadly short on stories of secret rendezvous aboard luxury jets. "We sat down together in the early stages and again before we started filming when we were reading the scripts out loud," he deadpans. "What's his reaction been? He seems excited about it."

Their meetings were strictly business, he insists, though it did make him think more about fame, in particular how commercial success can help realise otherwise impossible creative goals. Such as the time earlier this year when he was invited to Damien Hirst's studio in South London to create a spin painting. After Kano documented the experience on Instagram, including footage of him pouring bright blue paint onto a spinning canvas, a friend messaged him to ask if that was his new normal, hanging out with millionaire former YBAs.

"I can't speak about our collaboration too much," he grins. "But I didn't expect to do my own painting. When I went in they had it all set up and I put the overalls on, chucked all this paint everywhere – it was sick! He's another really inspirational guy. I think you get to a point where you know all of your ideas can be realised. No matter how crazy. That's the ultimate dream."

Kano's spin painting is currently propped up in his living room waiting for him to decide which wall space it should occupy. Another reminder, like those meetings with Drake, or his recent show at the Royal Albert Hall, of the distance he's travelled since those days scribbling down rhymes in his bedroom. "I understand how far I've come. To play at the Royal Albert Hall and have an orchestra backing me up..." For once, he's lost for words. There's a line in Hoodies All Summer's opening track Free Years Later: "Success brings more stress." Is that really how it feels? "Well, every level you go to you realise there's another one above. I'm always aspiring to that next level."

Outside, a huge Mercedes is parked in front of the studio. It looks every inch a grime star's ride, but after saying his goodbyes Kano walks straight past it and under a grimey railway bridge. Wherever the next level awaits, today he's headed there on foot. Proof, if any were needed, that Kano is still a man of the streets.

Q ICON *Presented by* RAYMOND WEIL GENEVE

CHRISTINE AND THE QUEENS

PRESENTER: **ROSE McGOWAN**

Q's icon of the year says she'll keep shaking up pop music and reveals the superstar team-ups she has planned for 2020.

What does the word "icon" mean to you?
I never questioned it until now. When I think "icon", I think of Laurie Anderson – someone inspirational that you come back to when you search for extra faith in life. Laurie Anderson in *[album/concert film]* Home Of The Brave – the whole composition is super demanding and super accessible and generous and gritty, and breaking everything you can expect from a classic gig. From her I take that you don't have to take people for imbeciles and you can trust deeply in the audience's intelligence, which is something she did greatly.

"I'm trying to be as free as I can": Christine (with presenter Rose McGowan) sets her stall out for 2020.

When people call you an icon, what do you hope they see in you?
At first, when I created Christine, it was meant to be contagious. It was not meant to be just for me, it was meant to be everyone's Christine – it was just naming the feeling of wanting to be daring. The thing that pleases me the most is when people, mostly young girls, come up to me and say, "My Christine made me do this." It becomes a feeling of super daringness that I like.

> "Pop music is so curated and perfectly chosen now, I want some awkwardness back."

How have you and the motivating question at the heart of Chris changed in the past year, post-second album?
It's been a whirlwind year. I realised, performing the second album, that it was immensely campy in the best way. By camp I mean there was a pure gesture of braggadocio that was super exterior, which was great. But I felt also that I was coming back to something more fragile. I don't mean that in a negative way, more being on the same verge of crumbling that was Christine for me at the beginning. I came back to that very initial idea – of naming a state of getting out of something really dark – but with the woman I am now, which is older and hornier. It's a weird circle back.

You've said that all the provocations you tried to make with Chris were vindicated because you got the bigoted reactions you expected. Does that mean you have to revisit these fundamentals to make people understand, or do you not care and move on?
I'm tempted by the idea of not explaining at all any more. Just to see what it will look like. There was this slight hurt of trying to explain and being misunderstood, so I thought, "I should probably just shut up and see what happens." And also, if you decontextualise the art from the commentary, you create differently. So, knowing I will be silent, I am creating differently. I think you become super confident that the piece you're making is going to be the only vector of questioning and so it makes it more daring. This is what Christine was about in the first place. The first time I started to sing, I stopped caring what people would think of my voice. It's going to be more fun also to just release something and shut up and watch.

Do a Beyoncé...
Maybe just for a second and I'll speak again in two years. Or maybe I won't be able to shut up because I always speak a lot! The Beyoncé move is a real power move, a real flex. Maybe I'll do a soft flex. Soft Flex, the new album. Good title.

The fundamentals of pop have shifted this year – everyone from Ariana Grande to Billie Eilish and Rosalía have changed everything. What is exciting about those changes and what's frustrating?
Lots of things to still be mad about, I think. The male gaze is still there to disrupt, even though it's slightly altered – Billie Eilish is deflecting that really well, but it's still really smoothed out. I'm always thinking about nuances because I am obsessed with the concept of nuances in the pop industry. Everything is so curated and perfectly chosen now, I want some awkwardness back. I want mistakes back. I'll bring it back! I am the first to say that everything is a stage and identity is a performance, but I am missing some roughness in pop. I was watching a video of early PJ Harvey – she had something so irresistible and at the same time impossible to grasp. I want that feeling back.

Perhaps we've been exposed to so much culture that nobody can have that effect any more...
I think Frank Ocean has some of that. When people were mad about "where is the album?" and he was building the staircase *[in visual album Endless]*, I watched the whole thing. It was resistance, it was really interesting.

Gone, your track with Charli XCX, is one of 2019's best and collaboration

OLIVER HALFIN

Killer Queen: Héloïse Letissier with her Q Icon award.

has been huge this year. Are you interested in doing more?
Yeah, I won't ever force it, though. I'm not the most social person on Earth. If it happens – it did with Charli, which was really genuine and not at all forced. Any time it's *[preconceived]*, it doesn't work for me.
Who do you want to get in your net?
I'd love to do something with Rosalía. I love her album. I like how consistent and fierce she is. I'm going to say huge names that never will say yes, but I love Travis Scott. Travis Scott, Rosalía and me. I could just do an ad lib in French.
Who's your hero of the year?
My manager. She was combative and super tender and super nurturing. I witnessed how much she has to endure as a woman in an industry full of A&Rs that flex constantly.
How will you remember 2019?
A hectic year. The beginning of something a bit more out of my control, in a good way. I felt a renewed faith in the really vulnerable form of art that is performance, where things are out of my reach in the best way. I never want to forget that again. I think I did forget it a bit the year before.
Why?
Because you're caught up in the whole performance of what an artist *is* instead of *doing* art. Sometimes it feels like you spend more time showing up saying, "I'm an artist!" than making art.
You lost your mum this year. You must have been exorcising a lot onstage.
Yeah, that tour was the most cathartic thing I ever did but also it was a good album to perform at that moment. I was like, "Thank God, I wrote that kind of a record." Songs like Doesn't Matter became purely cathartic. Also, that album is a strong skeleton so I could lay a bit on it. Performing Girlfriend when you feel like shit is a good thing, because then you feel a bit better.
What are you fighting for in 2020?
Fighting for? I dunno, I'm questioning the concept of fighting. How should we fight? What's the most efficient way to fight? I'm being super philosophical right now. But also same old, same old. Carving new ways of being a woman. Trying to be as free as I can.
It's an interesting point about fighting – pop has been hyper-activist for a few years, every new artist is supposedly political. But it doesn't necessarily make good art or change anything. More intuitive, emotional art can be just as politically resonant...
I read a lot about the song Alright by Kendrick Lamar, which is a piece of art that resonated strongly with a movement, and I don't think you can calculate that. The people have to take it and make it what they want to. We don't master everything as artists. I think we have to just be humble with that. *LAURA SNAPES*

Rose McGowan: "I'm on the other side now..."

"I'm inspired by anybody that fights back against power."

Actor, activist and musician Rose McGowan reflects on a year of healing and survival.

You presented the Q Icon award to Christine And The Queens – are you a fan?
I'm a huge fan; her music just makes my body want to move and it makes my soul happy. She has so much passion and it just inspires me and makes me passionate, too. I've met her twice, and every time I get shy.

Who's been your personal icon this year?
My icons always tend to be dead people. I just re-read Malcolm X's autobiography written with Alex Haley, and I hold him as a huge activist and change-maker in the world: somebody who fought against great odds and obviously lost, to a degree, because he was killed. But what a change he made.

Have any living people inspired you in 2019 as well?
Every woman who's stood up, every woman who makes music despite being told they can't and every man who wants to be better. They're my icons. I'm inspired by anybody that fights back against power – anybody that stands up and says, "No more."

You have inspired people far beyond the world of Hollywood. What has been the ripple effect of the #MeToo movement in your own experience?
I've spoken to musicians, I've spoken to factory workers, I've spoken to maids, I've spoken to executives in law... And it's making a difference. My goal is to change the world by 10 per cent, and after that people can keep going. I think that 10 per cent has been achieved, we're definitely closer than we were two years ago. But there's still a lot to do. I tweeted something about Hillary Clinton recently *[McGowan said she believed Hillary Clinton's people, "were protecting the Monster" in reference to Harvey Weinstein]* and only right-wing newspapers picked it up, which makes me very suspicious of left-wing media because none of them covered it. People don't realise what a conspiracy there is behind the scenes, and that's the hardest fight I've had: the massive conspiracy.

What is the next big challenge ahead for the #MeToo movement?
What needs to be more normalised is people realising that it's not their shame, and if they speak out, that it's not a shame-based thing for them. They can give that shame back and stand in their own power. Once you get stolen in that way, it takes a lot to come back. Yes, people get used to *[being in the news]* in a certain way, but it's about their sister, their brother, about *anybody* being able to stand in their truth. I don't think you can stop that.

What have been your personal highlights of the year?
It's been a really healing year for me, and I've spent a lot of time in London working on my album Planet 9 and piecing myself back together with the help of art. The last couple of years have been brutal for me. It came close to snapping me and I'm still here, still standing and I'm here at the Q Awards...

What have you learned about yourself from doing music?
That it heals. It's hard to produce an album – I've never done it before – but I know I've done something that is art, that is beautiful and that makes people feel really good when they listen to it. I start *[the album]* with Blade Runner dialogue: "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain..." and then I sing.

How long had you had that musical itch?
I sang on soundtracks in the past, but it was always country music for some reason. I do love country, though – I want to do a country album next. Dolly *[Parton]* is a hero, of course, plus I love Loretta Lynn and Dwight Yoakam. I would love to go to the Country To Country Festival and see a bunch of British people loving country.

Finally, what's the one thing you'll always remember from 2019?
Surviving. I'm on the other side. I feel like I'm in my power now. That happened this year, and London has been a huge part of that for me. A *huge* part. *GEORGE GARNER* »

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"Things are exciting...": Madness (from left, Mark Bedford, Mike Barson, Suggs, Chris Foreman, Dan Woodgate, Lee Thompson) with their Q Inspiration gong.

Q INSPIRATION

MADNESS

PRESENTER: **DENNIS ALCAPONE**

The ska-pop legends celebrate their 40th anniversary with a Q Awards knees-up.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Madness. Why do you think you've lasted this long?

Suggs: Because we were all friends before the band started. We have a lot of tolerance for each other. Up to a certain point.

Chris Foreman: Yeah, and I'm fucking losing mine, I tell you.

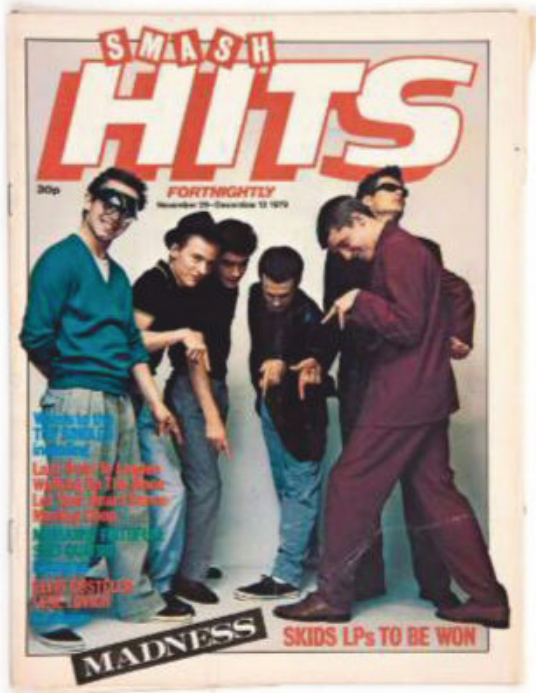
S: And then we'll just kill each other.

CF: I just suppose, like he says, we all still tolerate each other, and get on quite well.

You've won the Q Inspiration award. Do you see and hear your influence in other bands?

S: I thought One Direction nicked everything...

Dan Woodgate: Blur, obviously. Also... what's Ricky's band? Kaiser Chiefs, yeah.



Nutty boys: Madness grace the cover of pop bible Smash Hits way back in 1979.

S: Y'know, it's not our place, is it? It's for you to say.

This year you published your early years book, Before We Was We. Did it make you feel nostalgic? Emotional?

CF: Yeah, I think it did for me, y'know. Reading other people's stuff, about their lives, was really nice.

S: It was nice that everyone had their own perspective. And everyone has a different perspective on all the things that happened.

Mark Bedford: I talked to a lot of people around the band as well, a lot of friends, and got their perspective on it, and it was great to hear their stories. Talking to them helped me to remember.

What's the one thing you will always remember about 2019?

S: We did an orchestral version of our set with David Arnold at Kenwood House *[on*

GETTY

Hampstead Heath, North London]. We started off with that *[10-minute, 2009]* song The Liberty Of Norton Folgate and we weren't sure. But it just went down a storm from there on. It was a marvellous evening.

MB: It resonated as well because we, as kids, had all hung out there at Kenwood.

CF: I think for me, the Kenwood thing was great, and doing the book. David Arnold is definitely a genius guy. I've been mixing the audio and the stuff you find buried in it, it's unbelievable. You hear a bit of harp and it's amazing. We filmed it, so I've been editing the film. We spent £1200 on drones and it was worth every penny!

S: We've got to get the rest of them out of the trees...

What would you change about this year?

CF: The way the country's going fucking right wing. The whole world is, really.

S: That *[senior adviser to the PM]* Dominic Cummings, I'd change him into a toad. Oh fuck, he is already. Never mind. Next...

Have you been on any marches or got involved with any activism this year?

CF: Yeah, I went to the big one in Trafalgar Square for another Brexit referendum. Funnily enough, I rang Lee *[Thompson, sax player]*, who's very apolitical and he went, "I'm here." And I met him.

S: Lee was on an Extinction Rebellion thing.

CF: It's like, "Right, lock them all up, they can't march." I mean, what the fuck?

MB: Yeah, that is terrible. A London-wide ban on fucking demonstrating.

CF: Y'know what they should do? They should do a rebrand. Call it something else. "You can't have Extinction Rebellion." "Right, we'll call it fucking Ninja Turtles." That's what I'd do.

Did you have any resolutions at the start of the year? Did you stick to them?

DW: I didn't. So, I did.

S: Well, half-heartedly, I've been trying to make this band something. And I'm halfway there. I've singlehandedly dragged them up by their bootstraps.

If you could choose one song or album to be saved from 2019, what would it be?

S: For me, it was the Dave album. Aw mate, his lyrics are great. It always amazes me when you hear great rappers like that, how dense the narrative is. Because you can get – like any pop music – very clichéd, y'know. But it's not at all. It's very poetic.

What are you looking forward to in 2020?

CF: Another comeback tour. Mike Barson *[keyboardist]* pointed out that, really, our 40-year anniversary starts about now *[with the release of the first Madness album One Step Beyond... in October 1979]*. He's very clever, Mike. So, a whole new load of merchandising stuff *[laughs]*.

S: Y'know, things are exciting. I mean, hopefully we're going to make a new album and do some great things. *TOM DOYLE*

"Nothing stays the same forever. Be flexible."

Reggae DJ/producer Dennis Alcapone on why it's important to move with the times.

What's the one thing you will always remember about 2019?

The Q Awards. Q Awards is top of the pops.

What would you change about this year?

I'd bring my sister back. She died a couple of months ago. She was like my mother, my friend, my sister. She was everything to me, so if I could bring her back in 2019, that would be my biggest move.

It's been 45 years since you moved to Britain from Jamaica. What changes have you noticed in the country?

Well, I see people from the West Indies are more accepted. That's a good thing. Because I heard some stories before I got here that weren't pleasant. London's had good changes. The people accept the different races of people more, even though we still have a lot to work on.

Are you a grime fan?

Yes, yes, yes. It's a different genre and, y'know, different generations appreciate different things. We have to move with the times. Nothing stays the same forever. So, we have to be flexible.

Have you been on any marches or got involved with any activism this year?

I never have. One of the reasons is all the marches, all the demonstrations that have been going on for centuries, I don't see much changes. I see people sacrifice themself to make a change. I can take one example – Bob Marley. Bob Marley was peace and love and harmony. Look at the youths nowadays, killing each other. Does it make sense? It make no sense. That's the problem. Everyone is searching for an answer. We can't find an answer, y'know. The world is what it is. A lot of different people monopolise the world for their own good, right? And there's not much we can do to change that. Our hands are tied. So, we have to go on and try to live good with our neighbours, our friends, our fellow human beings. That's how I see it.

What's the most astonishing thing you've seen this year?

To be honest with you, I don't like what I see is going on. I don't like the wars across the world. I don't like how people are killing each other for nothing. In London, if you're at the wrong place at the wrong time, you can get yourself killed. We should be able to go out, enjoy ourself, and get back safely to our homes. Right? Too much madness. The only madness I like is the group Madness!

If you could choose one song or album to be saved from 2019, what would it be?

My niece Stefflon Don had a song, Hurtin' Me *[actually from 2017]*, with French Montana. I love that song. But apart from that, nobody really move me as such, musically. I like to hear good singing. I like to hear a melody. I like to hear tunes with bridges. That's me. That's what I like. I grew up on the R&B music from America. Those songs... people are not making songs like that any more. Real love songs. Sometimes all we hear is protest songs. Y'know, when you go out, you want to enjoy yourself. You don't want to hear about people's problems.

What are you looking forward to in 2020?

Going on the road and doing some shows as usual. I've got an album coming out next year. That's my vision at the moment. To keep on doing what I'm doing. Keep on doing the positive things and try and educate the youth, so them go away from this madness track that they're on. *TOM DOYLE*

»

Dennis Alcapone: "There's too much madness!" Suggs may not agree...

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Q BEST VOCAL PERFORMANCE

LITTLE SIMZ

PRESENTER: **ELLA EYRE**

The rapper had a great 2019 but seeing her nephew playing for Arsenal topped the lot.

You won the Best Vocal Performance award for your third album, GREY Area. Have you been pleased about the reaction to the album?
I was nervous before it came out because I knew it was so different from what I'd done in the past. I didn't know if people were going to be open to the new direction of Simz. Luckily, it turned out they were.

It's a record that anyone can relate to, particularly the lyrics on songs such as 101 FM.
That's what I was hoping for. I'm just a girl from North London, but my story is universal, and it's one that many other girls have experienced. I'm just trying to show that, regardless of where you come from, it is possible to make things better for yourself. Don't get me wrong, it's very difficult. But it is possible. There's no excuse. You can do it.

What is the one thing you will always remember about 2019?
It's impossible to say. I've loved all of it. Getting this award today is just another amazing part of it.

Stormzy giving you a shout-out at Glastonbury must have been a highlight?
That was crazy. I feel blessed that people like Stormzy even know I exist. It just gives me more fire in my belly to keep on doing what I'm doing.

How did your collaboration with Kasabian's Serge Pizzorno (on The S.L.P single Favourites) come about?
Serge reached out to me to do that song, and there was no doubt in my mind that I should do it. Kasabian are a great band, but you would never think that Simz and Serge would do something together. I love that! And it worked. It just shows that we can crossover and do things that are outside of the box, and still make cool music.

If you could choose one album from 2019 to save, what would it be?
Probably Snoh Aalegra's – Ugh, Those Feels Again. I love the musicality, I love the content, I love what she's talking about. It's an album that really touched me.

What's the most astonishing thing you've seen this year?
Probably seeing my nephew play for the Under 6s at Arsenal. I'm from Highbury and I've always been an Arsenal fan, so that was a very proud moment. He's only five, but he's going to be a star.

Who's your hero of the year?
Kano. He's always supported me, backed me and championed me. So yeah, man, it's him for sure.

How did your role as single mum Shelley in Top Boy come about?
I auditioned for it, like I do for lots of things. Again, Kano played a big part in introducing the executive producers to my music and stuff. But I went up for the role and I guess I did an alright job.

Were you a fan of the first two series?
A huge fan. I was at school when it came out and everyone was talking about it. It felt like finally we had a TV show that represented us. I remember at the audition thinking, "Not only am I excited about the audition, but I'm excited about the show coming back." So to get the role was unbelievable. It's a big deal for me to be in it. *PAUL MOODY* >>

Check this out: (above left) Little Simz collects her award; (below) with presenter Ella Eyre.

MARCO VITTUR

Q MAVERICK

EDWYN COLLINS

PRESENTER: **RICHARD HAWLEY**

The Orange Juice leader and indie icon shares the secrets on a career lasting over four decades and how to have the health of an athlete.

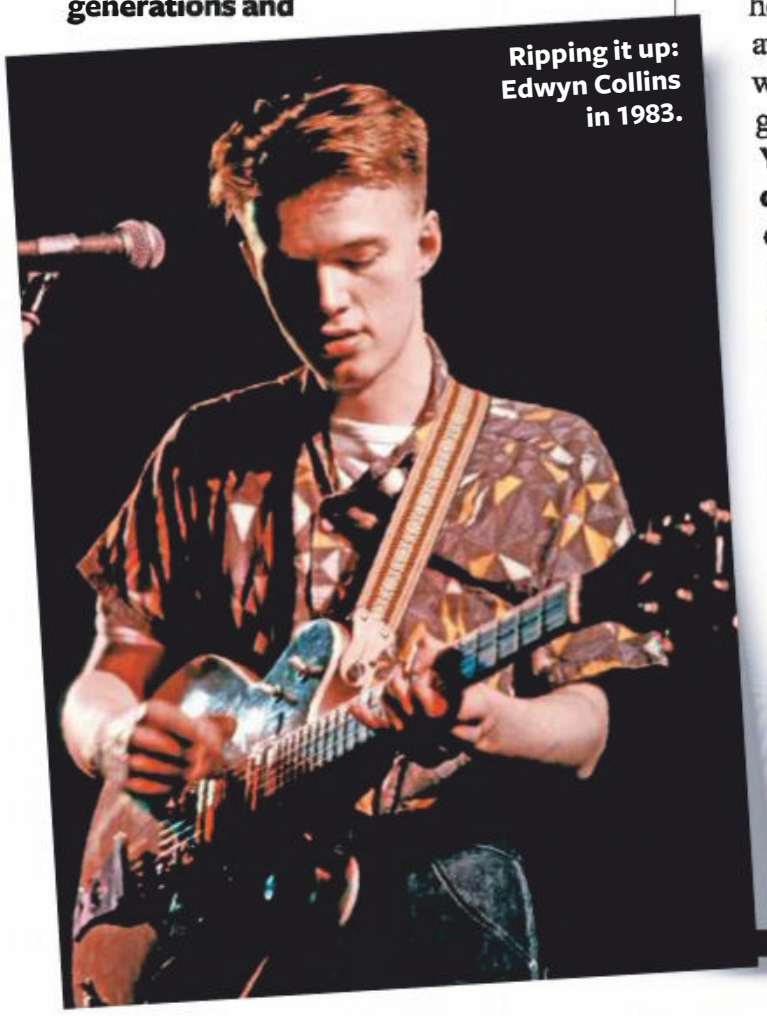
Congratulations on your Q Maverick award. Have you always felt like a maverick in music?
No, nowadays I'm an establishment figure. When I was young I was very good at alienating the music business. I made a point of doing that, often for my own amusement. But now I'm an old codger and everybody is nice to me.

What's the most maverick thing you've done in your career?
Paying for a set of TV ads for the last Orange Juice album *[1984's The Orange Juice]* myself, with the last of my money, because Polydor Records were ignoring me. It was quite petty but I loved the ad and the people who helped me make it and for a short time it did annoy Polydor, so that was good. Then they dropped Orange Juice. Oh yes, and I started a riot in a marquee at the Reading Festival in 1991. They started pulling the tent down.

"Down the hatch!" Edwyn enjoys a tipple during the Q Awards ceremony.

> "I stuck to my guns, I had some good songs and some very good ideas."

There was a lot of love in the room when you got up on the stage, appreciation that spread across generations and genres, from Richard Hawley to Dizzee Rascal. How did that make you feel?
It's very nice, thank you. I really enjoy hobnobbing with the stars. I was at the awards with my whole band and crew, whom I love dearly and we had a really good time, thank you Q.



Ripping it up: Edwyn Collins in 1983.

You have a body of work that covers over four decades. How would you describe your career in a sentence?
I stuck to my guns, I had some good songs and some very good ideas, and that's how you get a 40-year career despite having had very few hits.

This year you seem to have been as busy, work-wise, as you've ever been. Does that mean your health is relatively stable? (Edwyn suffered two strokes in 2005.)
My health is tip-top. I'm very lucky. I have the blood pressure of an athlete these days.

How much effect has your move to Helmsdale on the Moray Firth had on your recovery?
Lots of walking and the freshest air on Earth has to be good for anyone.

You've obviously become a keen bird watcher since the move, and your nature drawings are very detailed and delicate: have you always drawn?
Always. And it was the first thing that came back to me when I was recovering.

What's the most surprising or spectacular wildlife you've seen from the window of your studio?
We sometimes see red deer in the snow, and very often roe deer. But the most spectacular was a pod of orcas – killer whales – out at sea, but not that far from the shore. They were close enough to see clearly through the binoculars.

Who's your hero of the year?
Gary Knighton, my tour manager.

Your new album Badbea and the tour went really well. Is it important to you to keep having new songs to play alongside the older tunes?
Oh yes. I'm a songwriter and a musician, so that's what you do. Write songs and make records. Crack on.

What's next?
Maybe some more shows, we had such a good time recently. More recording with lots of talented people in my Highland studio in Helmsdale. Lots of walking up and down hills. *ANDY FYFE*

»

GETTY/PETE CRONIN, MARCO VITTUR, CARSTEN WINDHURST

What presence: Edwyn Collins with his Q Maverick award; (right) accepting his gong from Richard Hawley.

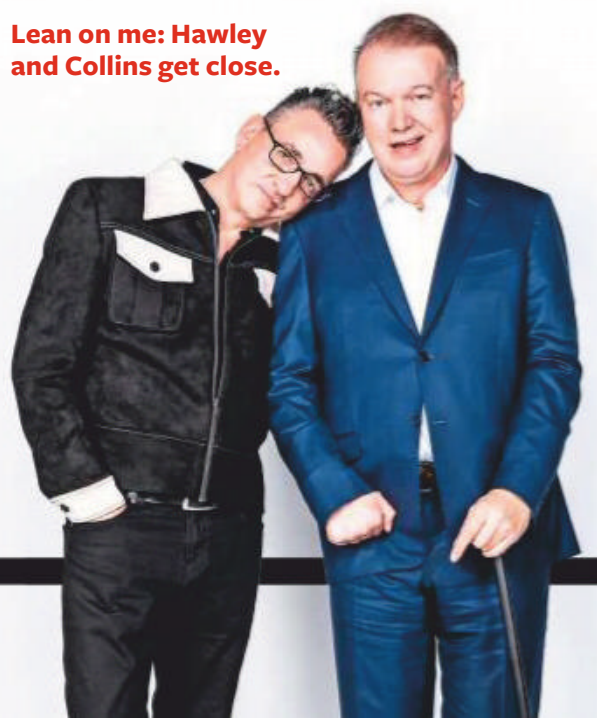
Richard Hawley: likes Greta Thunberg, hates Donald Trump.

"You have to believe that change is possible."

Sheffield singer-songwriter Richard Hawley got suspended from school because of Edwyn Collins. He tells us how.

You presented an award to Edwyn Collins tonight. He once got you in trouble, didn't he?
When I was 15, I went on a school trip to Manchester to some art gallery, which I never went to. My mum was working nights at the Northern General Hospital as an auxiliary nurse, so she didn't have time to make me a packed lunch for this day trip. Instead she gave me a pound in the days when it used to be pound notes. So we arrived at this museum and there was a record shop opposite. In the window was Felicity by Orange Juice which I'd already heard on John Peel. If you bought it you could get Blue Boy on Postcard Records as two-for, Felicity was 75 pence, but if you went for two singles it was 99p. So I basically wagged it off the school trip and went hungry. I sat outside the coach all day and when the teachers came back they went, "Hawley! You're suspended!" I've still got both those massively inspiring records, and a lifetime habit of visiting record shops, although it costs a lot more than 99p now.

If you could choose one song or album to be saved from 2019, what would it be?
Even though he's my mate, I really like what Jarvis is doing, the *[Must I]* Evolve? thing. It's quite interesting because when I started my record he was playing a gig in the cave where I'd done one, Devil's Arse *[in Derbyshire]*. Because the song is the whole evolve thing, I think it's fascinating they did the basic recordings there. Jarvis really wanted me to see the gig so I drove over and he asked me what I thought. It was the very embryonic beginnings of that track, so they actually recorded the beginnings that night and have built on it as time went on. I think it's an amazing work.



Lean on me: Hawley and Collins get close.

What's the one thing you will always remember about 2019?
The tour I'm on. It's not over yet, but I've enjoyed it more than any other solo tour ever. Again it's the evolution thing, as a band and as a writer I feel like I've arrived in a good place.

Do you miss Scott Walker, who passed away this year?
It's a sad loss. Me and Jarvis went to his funeral, Scott was a good pal! He just did his own thing, he shunned the limelight which is a good thing to do. He was a lovely bloke. I've got loads of emails from "Noel" because I knew him as that too *[Walker's real name was Noel Engel]* and a lot of them are piss-your-pants funny.

You covered Bob Dylan for Peaky Blinders. Was that your TV moment of the year?
It was good fun because it was really quick to do. I'm a massive Dylan fan so when Cillian Murphy and *[director]* Anthony Byrne called me we just did it. Apparently those two went to the pub to decide who was going to cover the Dylan song, they got a quarter of a pint down and Cillian apparently said, "What about Hawley?" And Anthony said, "I know someone who knows him" so they rang the chap who I'd done the Funny Cow soundtrack with, got my number but I'd left my phone at home, as I often do. I was in the pub doing a cèilidh session with loads of Irish musicians. I was "well of a gallon in" when the phone rang in the pub and it was Cillian Murphy on the other end. He tracked me to the boozer. All I can remember from the call was "Dylan" so I said, "I'm in whatever". They had to ring me back the next day when I'd finished effervescing to confirm. We did it two days later in one take.

Did you have any New Year's resolutions at the beginning of the year? Did you stick to them?
Yes, to give up strong alcohol, wine and whisky and stuff like that, and I've stuck to it, yeah.

Who's your hero of the year?
It's got to be Greta Thunberg, hasn't it? Somebody so young taking on those horrible fuckers and getting the attention of people like Putin and that c**t who runs America – I don't want his name coming out of my lips. To get under the noses of people like that as a young woman is great. I just hope she's going to be alright. These companies have got so much power, so in a way you have to be innocent and young to believe it's possible. I've been at the receiving end of trying to resist things with my parents and my uncles and all the people in Sheffield who tried to resist Thatcher during the steel strikes, so I have seen the other side of that when it doesn't work and than can be so disheartening. You have to believe that change is possible, and it is.

PAUL STOKES

Q CLASSIC ALBUM

MAXINQUAYE

by TRICKY

PRESENTER: **JARVIS COCKER**

THE Q AWARDS 2019 IN ASSOCIATION WITH Absolute Radio

Fresh from his Q Award win, the Bristol game-changer warns that we'll need to replenish our stock. He's coming back for more.

Congratulations on your Q Award, Tricky!
Check this out! This kind of awards show ain't our thing, right? But it brings walls down, dunnit? I saw Jarvis Cocker around back in the day, but I meet him now, and he's such a good dude! I knew some of his music, and it wasn't my thing. Me and him working back then might never have worked, but now I realise he's just a real dude who's very uncomfortable with himself but who manages to get through – and that's what I'm all about! I never saw all that when I was younger.

Did you just say you're planning to do a track together?
Yeah! Because now, me and him could do a wicked song! It's like, have you ever heard that tune, "Where's me jumper? Where's me jumper?" Yeah, The Sultans Of Ping FC! Or that one, "Let me take you shopping, we'll go flip-flopping"? Jarvis is just a real dude! Me and him working now could work.

You talk in your new autobiography, Hell Is Round The Corner, about how you never got a Brit Award for Maxinquaye. Is it good to finally get acknowledged here?
To me, it's not about getting an award for Maxinquaye. This girl who used to sing with me, Francesca Belmonte – she told me something once: "You won't get properly recognised until you die." This is nice, and Q has been supporting me for many years, which is what makes it nice. But without being egotistical, there's a next level yet, and people ain't gonna get it yet. Without being egotistical, I know I'm on a different level. It's not because I'm more talented. I'm not the best artist. I feel like I'm blowing my own trumpet now... What I'm trying to say is, there ain't no Kurt Cobains any more.

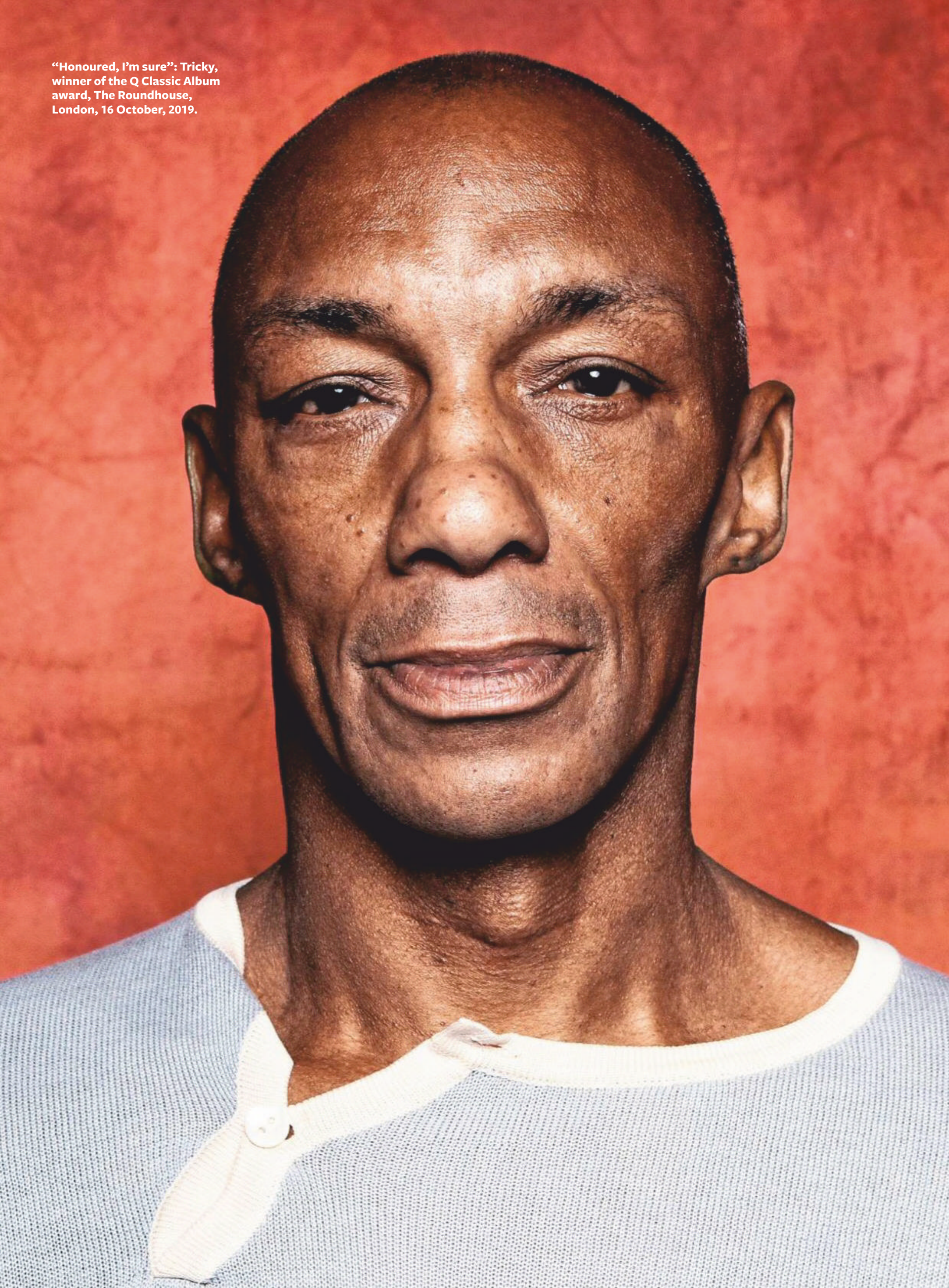
Still, it must be a feel-good moment for you, finally getting that recognition? It's not just Q or the music biz. Half of the audience out there are other musicians, and they were all on their feet for you...
I'm just lucky enough to get recognised by people like Q, because Q is kind of mainstream, right, but mainstream don't really see me, so it's great to have Q recognise me. But even when I watch the videos of the songs during the presentation, I know I've done better music than that, and I've got better music now that no-one's ever heard and might not ever get recognised! So it's all smoke and mirrors – but I love it! Thank you!

You lost your daughter earlier this year. We're sure that everyone wants to know: are you doing OK?
Pain is a great way to write. Listen, you come to my yard, and you're gonna get the first review on my album! I'm gonna prove to you what I'm saying. It's very nice I've got this award, but I've got better. If you wanna give out awards, you better start making loads of these Q things *[holds up his award]*, because we're coming back. *ANDREW PERRY*

"This kind of awards show brings walls down...": Tricky with his Q Classic Album gong for Maxinquaye.

> **"Without being egotistical, I know I'm on a different level."**

Turn for the story of Maxinquaye



“Honoured, I’m sure”: Tricky, winner of the Q Classic Album award, The Roundhouse, London, 16 October, 2019.

CLASSIC ALBUM

"There had been nothing like it"

He left Massive Attack over a £2.50 fish supper and recorded his solo debut in his bedroom with very low expectations. But Tricky's 1995 masterpiece Maxinquaye revolutionised music upon release. His biographer Andrew Perry tells its story.

Not many people saw Tricky's whirlwind mid-'90s success with Maxinquaye coming, least of all Tricky himself. Coining an experimental form of UK hip-hop delivered at half the speed of most Stateside rap, in a flagrantly West Country burr, his solo debut arrived amid Britpop's coke-fuelled knees-up like an erotic mystery from another world. On paper, its languid weirdness seemed way too abstract for commercial consideration in that climate.

"I thought I was going to be an underground artist," its creator himself believed, "making my own little weird music – the background guy, who was hardly ever seen."

But Tricky's auntie Sandy saw it coming. One of many intriguing characters in his backstory, Sandy was married to his uncle Michael Quaye, the brother of his late mum Maxine, after whom Maxinquaye was obliquely named. Michael was a gangster like several of Tricky's other uncles, and he was murdered in an illegal late-night shebeen in Bristol's Caribbean-flavoured 'hood, St Paul's, over some petty beef.

Sandy, however, was a gentle soul, and did Tarot for supplementary income. One day in the mid-'80s, her diminutive nephew succumbed to her offers of a free reading. Tricky doesn't remember too much about the occasion – he was in his teens at the time, and after a lifetime of marijuana smoking, he's not a man for detailed testimony – and he only recalls her enigmatic prediction that "something to do with eyes will make you successful."

He promptly forgot all about it, until after Maxinquaye had peaked in the British charts at Number 3 and become a stand-alone classic of its era. Then, his auntie's words somehow floated back into his mind and assumed the eerie stature of a premonition. Tricky realised that Aftermath – the very first song that he'd recorded on his own, towards the end of his stint as a waged rapper in Massive Attack – featured the following lyric: "Your eyes resemble mine, you'll see as no others can/ Here, inherit my kingdom, speak of our people's plan."

A self-pressed white label of Aftermath had landed him a deal with Island Records, and duly became the inaugural single that kickstarted his Maxinquaye campaign, and so, in this odd sense, the "eyes" had indeed made him successful. The plot only thickened when he thought about where those lyrics might have come from. For Tricky, music-making happened in a rush, from the hip. As for many a bedroom rapper who'd yet to develop any instrumental ability, the Akai S1000 sampler had allowed him to loop up beats and snippets of sound to make plausible pieces of music.

Unlike most people's, Tricky's were visionary. One of his two tracks on Massive Attack's Blue Lines album, Daydreaming, had launched the band as a 12-inch single in October 1990, its hypnotically thrumming groove and softly intoned rhymes setting a template for the so-called "Bristol sound", aka trip-hop.

One of the key problems which saw him falling out with Massive was that they wanted to work hard at capitalising on Blue Lines' success, putting serious hours into lyric writing and beat construction. To him, such labour was anathema. His music was customarily made in a heightened state, juiced to the eyeballs, frazzled on sensimilia, in a kind of productive trance where afterwards he wouldn't entirely understand what he'd created, or where it came from.

Much of Maxinquaye was made in this intoxicated condition, and when Tricky stopped to think about the words on some of the tracks, he could only come to one conclusion: "If I had written those words later in life, you could say, 'Oh, he wrote that about his children', but I had no kids at that point, so that was my mum speaking."

Since his mother had taken her own life when he was just four years old, Tricky believed that she was speaking through him from the other side.

How the West Country was won: (above) Tricky's late mother Maxine Quaye, after whom the album was named; (left) Tricky Kid enjoys himself at Butlins.

Adrian Nicholas Matthews Thaws was hardly pop's "boy most likely to" by birth. His first memory was seeing his mother's body on display in a coffin at home in impoverished Knowle West, when he was four. Thereafter, he

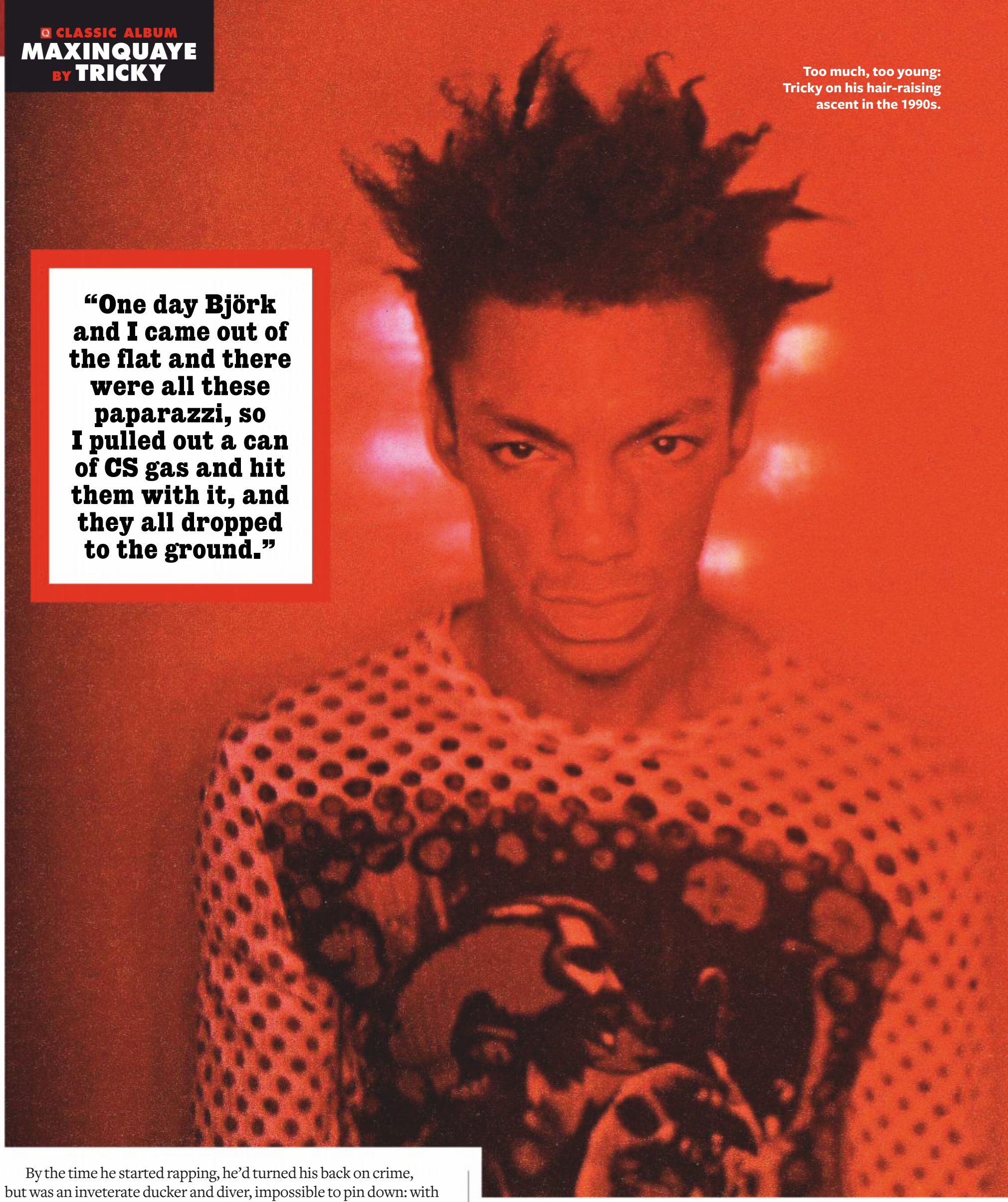
PAUL RIDER/CAMERA PRESS

"I now pronounce you man and er...": Tricky and then-girlfriend, Martina Topley-Bird, London, 1995.

"My only plan was to turn music upside down – a competitive hip-hop thing, like, 'Nobody can fuck with me. I'm going to make music that no one's heard before.'"

was passed between senior family members, while his Jamaican father, Roy Thaws, was effectively driven into absenteeism by little Adrian's great uncle on his mother's side, Martin Godfrey – a terrifying gangster with a milky eye who sent a letter from HMP Dartmoor, where he was serving seven years for carving the word "RAT" into another man's chest, threatening Roy with violence if he stuck around.

Tricky's autobiography, Hell Is Round The Corner, published last month, reveals plenty of the brutality he grew up around with great uncles Martin and Arthur Godfrey, and his Manchester-based uncle, Tony Guest. One can scarcely imagine the lasting impact that background had on him psychologically. In the short term, he became a shady teenager, an habitual thief, at 17 banged up for two months in Bristol's HMP Horfield for peddling dodgy £50 notes. »



Too much, too young: Tricky on his hair-raising ascent in the 1990s.

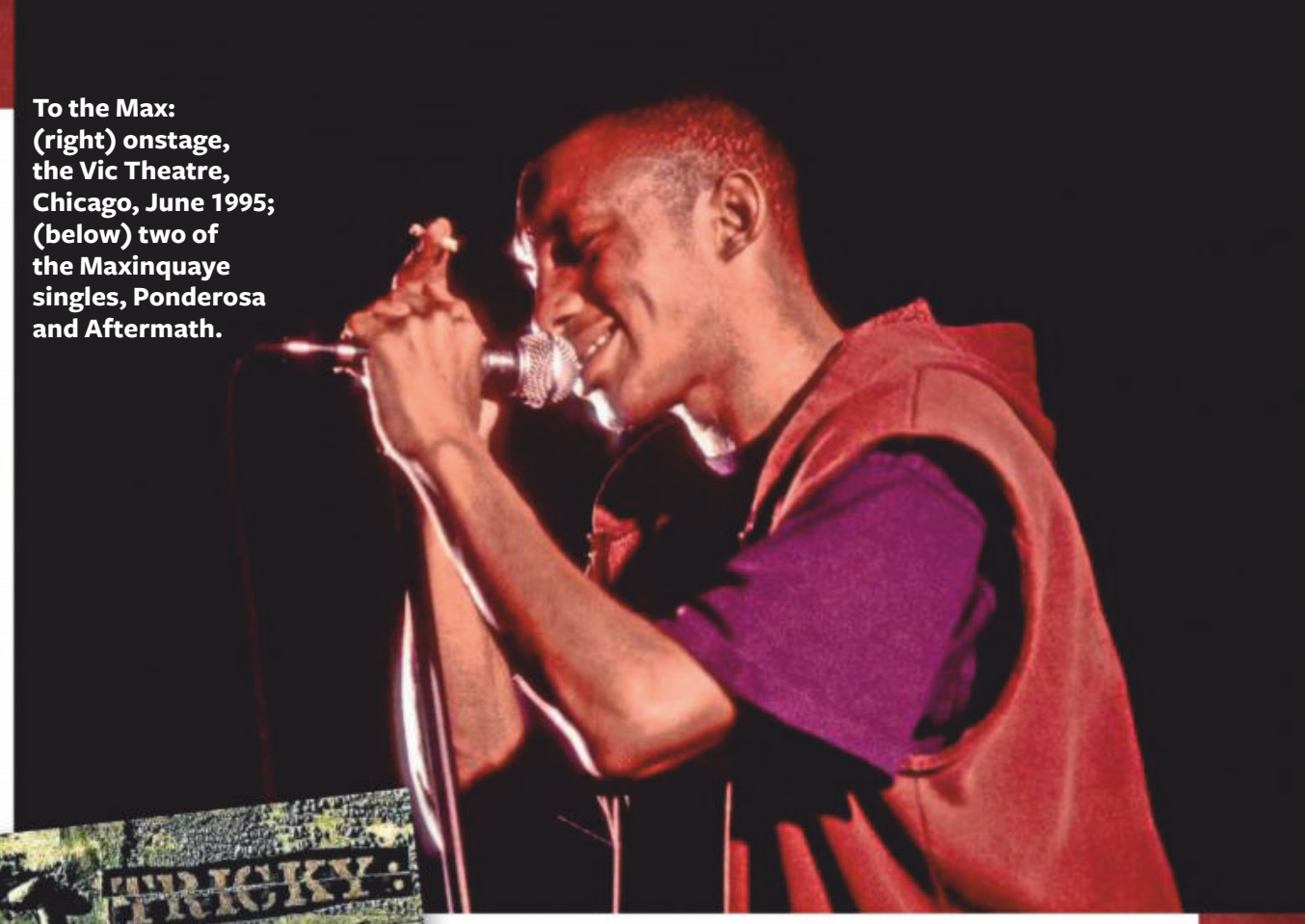
"One day Björk and I came out of the flat and there were all these paparazzi, so I pulled out a can of CS gas and hit them with it, and they all dropped to the ground."

By the time he started rapping, he'd turned his back on crime, but was an inveterate ducker and diver, impossible to pin down: with the mid-'80s Bristol sound system, The Wild Bunch, then the more successful crew that it spawned, Massive Attack, he proved elusive at crucial times. When the latter made an early short movie simply entitled, Where Is Tricky?, however, it was clear that they saw him – and his badass credentials – as a selling point.

At that point, British hip-hop was largely an anodyne, pop-oriented affair, and going into Massive Attack's second long-player, 1994's arduously gestated Protection, Tricky had rare cachet as a wildcat, and a contender, however enigmatic.

By the time it came out, he was long gone, the separation precipitated, not by Massive leader 3D declining to include Aftermath on Protection, but by its other leading light, Daddy G, refusing to lend him £2.50 to buy fish and chips at Leigh Delamere services, way back during the recording of Blue Lines.

"Most people would say, them not wanting to use Aftermath was a good reason to leave," he reasoned. "At the time, I didn't give a fuck: they just didn't want to use it, that's business. What was the end for me? When I couldn't borrow that £2.50, so I had to drive all the way back to Bristol feeling really hungry. I'm a funny guy like that."



To the Max: (right) onstage, the Vic Theatre, Chicago, June 1995; (below) two of the Maxinquaye singles, Ponderosa and Aftermath.

It was "around 1992-93" when Tricky first met Martina Topley-Bird. She was sitting on a wall in the Fosseway, just around the corner from where he was now renting a flat in upmarket Clifton, singing to herself. Martina was only 16, and currently sitting her GCSEs; Tricky was 24. He liked her voice, started chatting her up, and within a couple of weeks, he had her singing on a demo recording of Aftermath.

"I come out of my place, and there's the new Billie Holiday – how did *that* happen?" said Tricky, summing up the serendipity of chancing upon such a talented chanteuse.

After Massive Attack turned down Aftermath, and Tricky quit, there were a good few months in which he sat around not doing much, until his cousin and confidante Michelle Porter, who lived across the street in Clifton, urged him to get it released.

Loaned £500 by a weed dealer at his favoured boozer, The Montpelier, he pressed up some white labels with a view to getting himself a record deal. He and the dealer drove to London and shopped it around all the major labels and radio stations. Within a few weeks, a freshly scrubbed-up Aftermath was coming out on Island, home of such lofty artists as Bob Marley, U2 and Tom Waits. As the label's MD Marc Marot has attested, his boss Chris Blackwell saw Tricky as Britain's answer to Marley, and cautiously sought to groom him as such via one-off single deals.

The label duly installed Tricky in a two-room flat in Harlesden, a low-rent North London neighbourhood devoid of nightlife or distraction. As Julian Palmer, his day-to-day boss at Island subsidiary 4th & Broadway, recalled, "He did most of the album in that tiny flat – him sat on the floor with a stack of records and a sampler. All the initial mixes he did on headphones, at home, immersed in his own world. I'm sure that some of the whispered voicing was just to keep the neighbours from complaining."

The blend of Martina's sultry coo and Tricky's murmured rap, often arranged as a kind of cross-gender double-tracking that'd fallen out of whack, felt startlingly new – pre-war jazz meets future-forward hip-hop.

Aftermath, and second single Ponderosa, were shrewdly marketed towards a white alternative audience, via the music press and alt-radio DJs like John Peel. Given the enthusiastic response, Island were desperate to sign Tricky long-term, but ultimately ended up releasing Maxinquaye without a signed contract, as their star-in-waiting habitually wriggled free from constraint.

Similarly, Tricky's attitude towards sampling held little regard for the legal consequences, which, after the initial chaos surrounding early rap, now favoured the publishing rights of the sampled artist. Aftermath, for instance, prominently lifted from Marvin Gaye's That's The Way Love Is, topped off with a grinding guitar interpolation from (Dawning Of A) New Era by his childhood heroes, The Specials.

Equally certainly, however, many samples were too brief and/or contorted to be traced, and Tricky himself was certainly not scrupulous in noting down his thefts. On Overcome, the third single, Tricky was even sampling himself, playfully recycling verses he'd delivered on Massive Attack's Karmacoma.

To help level out the chaos in their artist's methods, Island paired him up with a mix engineer named Mark Saunders, best known for working on Neneh Cherry's Raw Like Sushi. This proved to be a fractious relationship, as Tricky viewed him as "a corny old dude", who'd try to add his own guitar parts on the sly, but chiefly Saunders was there to ensure a song's parts matched up in the right key, and to smooth off inevitable jagged edges due to its author's lack of musical training.

Yet this "savant" approach was what helped Maxinquaye break new ground. The album's most out-there track, Strugglin' – its dark heart, perhaps, which fully reflected the violent chaos of Tricky's upbringing – apparently prompted one Island A&R rep to emerge from a playback red-faced and confused by what he'd heard. Tricky had a mantra he'd repeat to his more musically savvy opponents in the studio: "If I can hear it in my head, it can be done!"

Another crucial energy running through the record was the palpable frisson between its two vocalists. Tricky hadn't kept in touch with Martina after she'd sung on the Aftermath demo, but he hastily tracked her down upon signing his deal months later, and she shelved plans for a postgraduate course in oceanography to rejoin him. The pair soon entered into a brief but notoriously fractious relationship, which quickly resulted in an unplanned pregnancy that added further claustrophobia to a pressure studio situation. On the one hand, Overcome was lit up with a highly real sexual charge, while on the other, Suffocated Love laid bare how trapped each of them must've felt as parenthood suddenly beckoned.

Yet, how creative they were in this unenviable position. Their take on Public Enemy's Black Steel In The Hour Of Chaos came about when Topley-Bird, very much a grunge type, took Tricky to a random indie gig. Afterwards they hung out smoking with the support band FTV, invited this ropey combo down to the studio the following day, and a ramshackle punky version was knocked out, with Martina gender-flipping Chuck D's inherently masculine lyric for an inspirationally irreverent cover.

Comparably fuck-you was Tricky's use, on Hell Is Round The Corner, of a sample from Ike's Rap II by Isaac Hayes. In itself, it was a perfectly beautiful and obvious piece of music to pilfer, except some believe that Tricky was already aware of its deployment on an imminent single, Glory Box, from his new rivals on the Bristol scene, Portishead – talent borrows, genius steals. »

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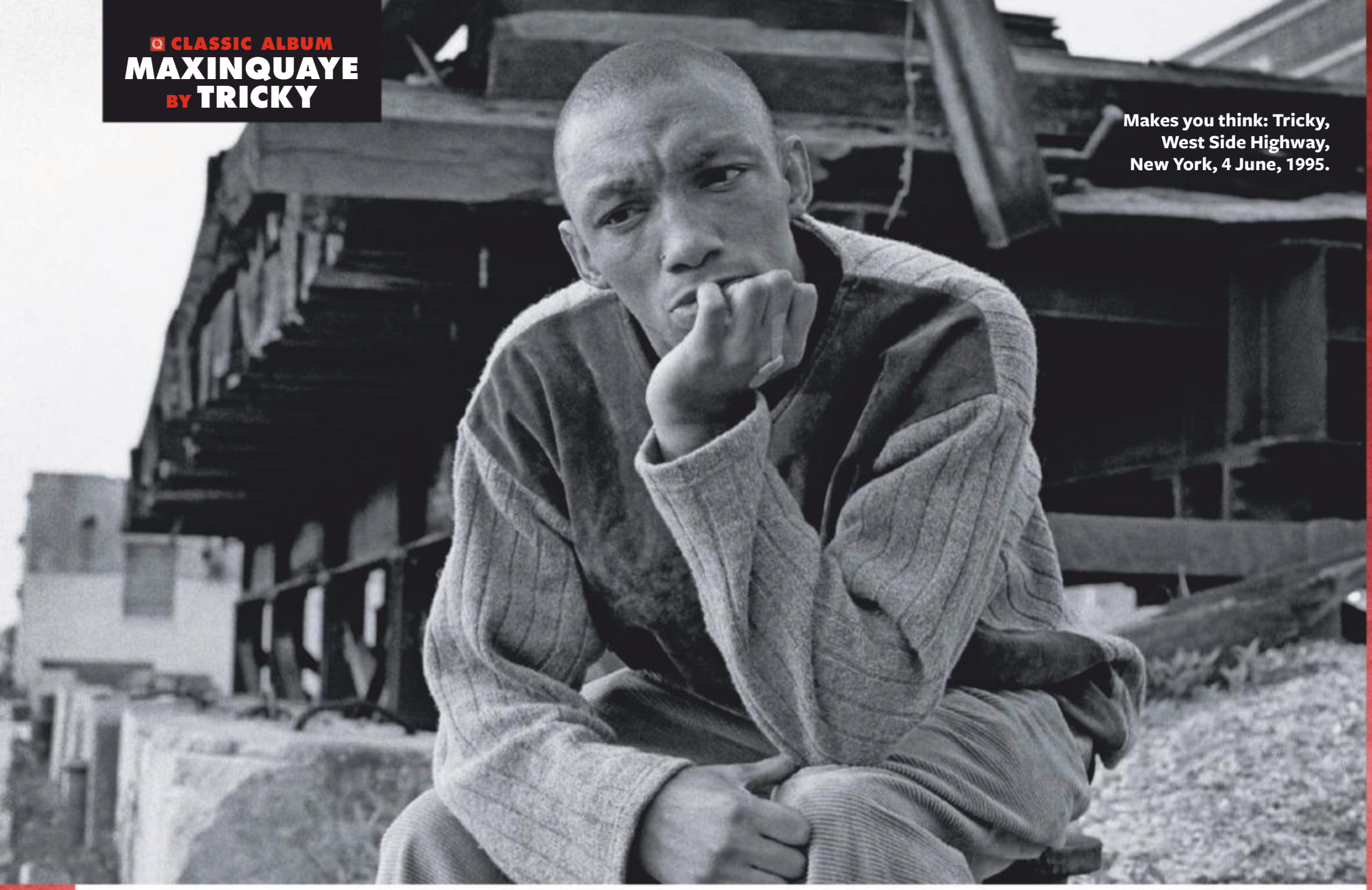


Makes you think: Tricky, West Side Highway, New York, 4 June, 1995.

By the time Maxinquaye was finished and Island started to sift through a minefield of sample clearance, the album's central couple were shacked up in a bigger flat, this time just off hoity-toity High Street Kensington. It was a long way, indeed, from the Bristol frontline evocatively referenced on Hell Is Round The Corner. In the ensuing months, Tricky would party hard there, on differing occasions welcoming through its doors the main players of Britpop – Damon Albarn and the Gallagher brothers each visited – whom he'd so eloquently lambasted on the avowedly forward-thinking Brand New, You're Retro.

True to his auntie Sandy's prediction, the "eyes" of Aftermath brought nephew Adrian to the brink of a success unimagined even by Island Records, who were caught on the hop when in February '95, Maxinquaye duly broke into the UK Top 5.

At the time Tricky was bullish, entrancing the media with lurid family revelations.

"When it came out, there was nothing that came before it," he later mused. "Things have come after it and tried to sound like it, but when Maxinquaye came out there had been nothing like it. And it wasn't because I'm a genius, it was because I don't know what I'm doing."

As he told this magazine a couple of years ago, his only plan was "to turn music upside down – a competitive hip-hop thing, like, 'Nobody can fuck with me. I'm going to make music that no one's heard before.'"

Once adulation had been heaped upon him and the sound he'd created, however, things went pear-shaped. One night he took Martina to see Pulp Fiction, but was horrified when all the ads beforehand effectively copied Maxinquaye. "It was this militant album," he spat, "but it'd all gone coffee-table."

The general trappings of fame, and getting recognised, didn't sit well with him. This situation didn't improve, when, as 1995 wore on, his fractious affair with Topley-Bird ended, and he was introduced to Björk at a party at Massive Attack producer Nellee Hooper's house. They dated for a month or two, a dream pairing given the Icelandic singer's meteoric pop success with 1993's Debut, and they became tabloid property.

"One day we came out of the flat," Tricky recalled at his book launch event last month, "and there were all these paparazzi running at us, so I pulled out a can of CS gas and hit them with it, and they all dropped to the ground. Police were called so I went to Björk, 'Here, quick!' and she stuck the canister down her trousers."

Attention was anathema to him, and the music he made thereafter became increasingly bleak, intense and uncommercial, as he sought to stay one step ahead of his imitators, and challenge his new-found audience. His relationship with his classic album has remained strained at best: in 2012, a Maxinquaye-in-full tour was a disaster as he refused to render it faithfully, instead calling up a gaggle of lairy mates for an onstage party every night.

To this day, Tricky could still be milking that album, at every opportunity broadcasting his pioneering role in British hip-hop, and how he paved the way for grime. The author of the coolest album of the 1990s, however, remains too cool for any of that. Q

Tricky's autobiography, Hell Is Round The Corner, is published by Bonnier.

LINER NOTES

Released: 20 February 1995

Highest UK Chart Position: 3

Producers: Howie B, Kevin Petrie, Mark Saunders, Tricky

Recorded: 1994

Studio: Tricky's home studio; Loveshack Studios; Eastcote Studios (all London).

Track Listing:
1. Overcome
2. Ponderosa
3. Black Steel
4. Hell Is Round The Corner
5. Pumpkin
6. Aftermath
7. Abbaon Fat Tracks
8. Brand New You're Retro
9. Suffocated Love
10. You Don't
11. Strugglin'
12. Feed Me

DAVID CARIO/REDFERNS/GETTY

Rebel with a cause: Jarvis Cocker proudly shows where his allegiances lie.

“I can confirm I have taken part in an episode of Catchphrase.”

Pulp man Jarvis Cocker reflects on a year on the road with the odd diversion for quiz shows and country trails.

You presented the Classic Album award to Tricky. What does Maxinquaye mean to you?
As I said in my speech: not all records released in 1995 still sound any good today. Maxinquaye has not only stood the test of time, there are parts of it that we still haven’t caught up with yet. The mark of a classic is that it somehow exists outside of time, in its own universe. That is definitely the case here. Many people have used it as a template for their own musical endeavours but no one has come near to replicating it’s unique atmosphere.
If you could choose one song or album to be saved from 2019, what would it be?
Bill Callahan’s album *[Shepherd In A Sheepskin Vest]*. I’ve had that record since it came out but I’m still digesting it, so it’s a good one. It’s kept me going for a while, that.
What’s the one thing you will always remember about 2019?
I suppose it sounds corny, but playing. We played live a lot. The last show we did was End Of The Road and that for me was a big deal because I’d been going to the End Of The Road festival for 10 years. I know Simon *[Taffe]* who runs it, but I’d never played there. It was our last show of the year and everything seemed to come to a focus.
You helped design Be Kinder, a walking trail for the National Trust, this year. Are you any good at map reading?
You know, people who hang around with me would disagree – and I’m no good doing it on a phone – but with an actual paper map I’m not too bad. I got asked to do it by *[artist]* Jeremy Deller and it was something to get people who wouldn’t normally go into the country to engage with it in some way. So we made a very easy trail that was pretty hard to get lost on because there were pink way-markers. The idea was that wherever you were you’d always see some pink in the distance, you’d always know which way to head. I would’ve heard by now if Mountain Rescue had been called out to help anyone.
Have you been involved in any of the Extinction Rebellion protests?
Yeah, we tried to play for them. We were supposed to play on the first day of the Trafalgar Square occupation but the PA got confiscated. We then tried a week later but the night before they cleared everyone out, so we’ve not had much luck there. We’ve got a banner for this Q Awards, so we’re going to represent. It’s the issue of the day, isn’t it? All the other ones become meaningless if you haven’t got a planet for people to live on.
It’s rumoured you are going to appear on Catchphrase this Christmas...
I’m not going to spoil it but I can confirm I have taken part in an episode of Catchphrase. That for me was a lifetime ambition realised because I used to watch it a lot as a kid and I’ve since inflicted it on my son through that channel Challenge, which shows old quiz shows. So to be on it was a bit mind-blowing. I enjoyed it but I won’t give away what happened, but I can tell you Jo Brand and Davina McCall were on it with me.
What in your life needs a backstop?
Like everyone else I didn’t understand what a backstop really is, but if it’s something to watch your back, then someone to tell me where my phone is at all times would be handy. I’m like everyone else: you try to get out of the house in the morning, then you pat yourself down and there’s a gaping hole. Then you walk around the house, shouting, “Can you ring me?!” But it’s on silent and you’re listening for the vibrations but you’ve only 30 seconds before it goes to voicemail. The stress levels can go through the roof, so I’d like a phone backstop. *PAUL STOKES* »

The long and short of it: Jarvis and Tricky say hi.

Q BEST LIVE PERFORMANCE *Presented by* CAVERN CLUB LIVERPOOL

MICHAEL KIWANUKA

at END OF THE ROAD

PRESENTERS: **JAMES LAVELLE & FELIX WHITE**

The North London singer-songwriter on his acting debut and why he's finally accepted he is the nicest man in music.

What will you remember most about 2019?
I don't want to sound too obvious but, unfortunately, I'll probably look back on 2019 as quite a turbulent time. Everything with Brexit, and climate change, but I suppose because of Greta Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion I'll also remember the way young people came together to demand change. That's been amazing to see.

You're ending the year on a high with your excellent third album, Kiwanuka, and your most powerful video yet for Hero, with its homage to the Black Panthers. Was the scenario your idea?
I have to mention the directors CC Wade, they're two brothers, amazingly creative. They did the treatment from my synopsis of what the song was about. Hero is inspired by Fred Hampton, part of the Black Panthers in Chicago, a young guy who got murdered when he was 21 but, even in his short life, he was such an enigmatic speaker. The song is about the sadness of people that have so much to give but die young and it's almost like they know because they pack so much in to such a short life. Why does it have to be like that? Especially at that time as a young black man, why did it always have to be that they lived so short? So Hero is thinking about Fred Hampton, but also what's happening on the news. Even in the last few weeks, it's still happening in America. So when I spoke to CC Wade I said I wanted to do something inspired by Hampton and the Black Panthers but make it really cinematic and they just ran with it. I'm so excited with the result.

Who would be your hero of 2019?
Young Greta is up there. She's definitely a hero of mine. Just having that strength, because it takes a lot of strength and reserve to really speak out the way she does. So her,

Kiwanuka's winning performance at this year's End Of The Road festival.

and if I'm allowed two heroes then the other would be Nipsey Hussle, the rapper who was murdered this year. He did so much for his community in Crenshaw, a poor black area of Los Angeles, like he had a clothing store that would give free clothes to people coming out of prison. I really admire what he did and the fact he was killed, again,

"We've defined different icons this year."

Mo'Wax founder James Lavelle on the new rock'n'roll youth culture.

'Waxing lyrical: Best Live Performance co-presenter James Lavelle.

If you could choose one song or album to be saved from 2019, what would it be?
I like the Tyler, The Creator album, Igor. I liked the diversity on the record, I thought he came out of his shell as a rapper and I thought it was a really interesting record.

What's the one thing you will always remember about 2019?
I did an exhibition that I was very proud of, where I did an album as an immersive music experience. That was quite a big thing I'd worked on for a long time. Because of the way I've always liked looking at records, it's always been the landscape of how I try to make music so to actually have it come to a reality was really great. I also think if you really want to remember this year it's a really fractured year, with Brexit and everything, it's a year of a lot of boiling points so I find I have a disconnect to many things going on. As a musician you get to go all over the world to these amazing places and yet we're in this insane conflict. I also think it's a year where we've defined different icons in youth culture, with climate change at the front of it. In many ways for youth culture that is the new rock'n'roll, they are the people who are changing and engaging with a youth movement.

Russia found a way to switch off the internet this year. Is this a button you'd like?
Sometimes. But then I've been quite good at not being immersed in social media, I have been able to navigate it, but I'd like that some days.

Who's your hero of 2019?
My daughter because she's been very ill and she's just come out the other side.

PAUL STOKES

MICHAEL CLEMENT

"I feel really proud." Michael Kiwanuka with his Best Live Performance award.

it really goes back to the theme of the song Hero. Another young black life cut short.

What's been cooking on the Kiwanuka stereo this year?

I really loved Strange by Celeste. But I'm always a bit behind with my music, like there's a brilliant album that came out last year which I've only just discovered this year by Richard Swift called The Hex which is so beautiful. That's been on my system a lot. My favourite new old record this year is a double vinyl compilation on Numero Group called Home Schooled: The ABCs Of Kid Soul. It's a mix of these rare children's soul and funk groups that came out on the back of The Jackson 5. It's raw, but the energy is *killer*!

You're sometimes criticised for sounding too "retro". But who, if they could, *wouldn't* want to make a record as good as Marvin Gaye?

That's a question I ask! Thank you. It was funny when I was starting out, I used to wonder why everyone had this worry about this "retro" thing when it's just the coolest sound. That's just my taste and I stay true to that but at the same time I'm always pushing myself and my creativity to keep it fresh.

Has there been much Netflix-and-chilling at Kiwanuka Towers in 2019?

When They See Us has got to be this year's top Netflix series for me... OK, yeah, I'm biased because they use Love & Hate on it, but that's not why it's my favourite, honestly! It's genuinely an amazing series.

Did you enjoy your acting debut in this year's Yesterday?

That was pretty cool but I only had to play myself. We filmed it at Latitude last year, about 9am before everyone was up. I'm onstage being me singing Love & Hate and the main character in the film is watching me with this other actor who's being a rubbish roadie. I only had to say two words – "You're fired!" – to the roadie, that's it. So I wouldn't really call it *acting* but it was great just to work with Danny Boyle. He's a national treasure.

"I used to wonder why everyone had this worry about this 'retro' thing when it's just the coolest sound."

Will 2019 be remembered as the year Dave Grohl finally had to relinquish his crown as "The Nicest Person In Music" to Michael Kiwanuka?

Haha! Yes, I've had a few people call me that now. Oh, man! If I am then I hope I don't ruin that title. Believe me, I have my moments but, yeah, it's a good thing I suppose. I still feel very lucky to be a musician because that's all I wanted to be. Even being here at the Q Awards, to still be busy, to have a third album out, to be touring and doing festivals again next year – just to still be here in the mix – I feel really proud. *SIMON GODDARD* »

Felix White: the England cricket team winning the world cup was "one of the most surreal and emotional days of my life".

"You wouldn't believe how big cricketers' hands are."

Former Maccabees man Felix White on his reinvention into label boss and cricket podcast host.

If you could choose one song or album to be saved from 2019, what would it be?
I like the new Hold Steady record a lot, Thrashing Thru The Passion. I really liked the Self Esteem record, it can't be mentioned enough, and Fontaines D.C.'s LP is incredible.

You co-host Tailenders, a cricket podcast, and you have managed to infiltrate the cricket establishment.

The gong show: (from left) James Lavelle, Michael Kiwanuka and Felix White.

> "I really liked the Self Esteem record. It can't be mentioned enough."

Are cricketers all secret Maccabees fans?
That's an interesting question that I ask myself every day. *[Record-breaking England bowler]* Jimmy Anderson used to come and see The Maccabees quite a bit. He was into the music, I was in love with cricket and in The Maccabees, so that was a thing. So when the band broke up *[Radio 1 DJ and Tailenders co-host]* Greg James, being the person he is, reached out and said, "Let's do something, man". So the thing we concocted was we would get together each week and talk about cricket. The Tailenders Podcast has taken on a phenomenon of its own now which is nothing to do with cricket and is just a series of huge in-jokes and freewheeling conversations.

Where were you when England won the world cup?
I was there at Lords! Tailenders did the morning before Test Match Special, so it was one of the most surreal and emotional days of my life. I ended up weeping into the arms of a Bristolian shoe salesman.

When have you been most starstruck this year, meeting musicians or cricketers?
With cricketers I don't get starstruck any more so much as physically dwarfed by them. You wouldn't believe how big their hands are! When you shake hands yours is inside theirs! It's still odd seeing a cricketer out of their whites though.

Who's your hero of the year?
[England bowler and batsman] Jack Leech!

What's the most astonishing thing you've seen this year?
The Super Over or Jimmy Anderson in full hi-vis gear shredding a mango onstage at Hackney Empire in front of 1500 people. That's what my life is now.

You've also been running a record label, Yala! Records. How has that been?
It's been great, it's been a way to find a lot of music. It's a right shock to the system when you've been a musician for 15 years to do the actual work of running a label. Even as I talk to you now, I can feel the emails going off in my pocket. I guess actual work happens to all of us at some stage. I love the nights Yala! Records does too. They are the kind of nights that you need to be taking vitamins for a month before and take the whole of the next week off, so I'm glad I've got one of those every two months in my calendar.

PAUL STOKES

Q HERO

KIM GORDON

PRESENTERS: **THE RAINCOATS**

The ex-Sonic Youth singer/bassist and creative tour de force reflects on a "busy and productive" 2019.

You won the Q Hero award – what does the word hero mean to you?
I feel it's a relief rather than "icon" or "legend"! Those things seem heavier. It is kind of a celebratory moniker, I guess – you're doing it for everyone.

Do you have a hero?
Well, The Raincoats *[who presented Gordon with her award]* certainly. In the last year... Lizzo, the presence she has. She's super-positive about her body. And she plays the flute! I think Elizabeth Warren is a hero. People complain, "Oh, she's too harsh" or blah blah blah, but she's smart as hell and she's been active for a long time and now she's built up this momentum. My fallback is *[other Democratic Presidential nominees]* Amy Klobuchar or Mayor Pete *[Buttigieg]*. He's kind of young but I like him a lot.

What do you think of the current wave of activism: climate strikes, Extinction Rebellion?
My friend who has been involved with demonstrating with Native Americans against the pipeline *[in North Dakota]* and things like that has been describing this feeling that Native Americans have been kind of ignored – it took a young white girl to be heard as a spokesperson for climate change and that's kind of disappointing. Because American Indians have been fighting for the environment for their whole lives. But, yeah, Greta Thunberg is amazing – to be that young to be such a force, to be so focused, is amazing.

Do you have a history of marching?
I did go to demonstrations in the late '60s and '70s. Were they scary? It was much more like, "Oh, there's a band playing, let's get high!" I remember going to a march in Washington DC, one of the first women's marches in the '90s, and then after Trump was elected I went to a big march in LA, like everyone else, really enraged and angry. People were brought together feeling hopeful that we could make some difference.

What's been the defining moment of 2019 for you?
This is as busy as I've been since my book came out *[2015 memoir Girl In A Band]*. 2019 has been busy and productive. A defining moment? The Warhol show *[Gordon had an exhibition, Lo-Fi Glamour, at Pittsburgh's Andy Warhol Museum this summer]* and playing the soundtrack for the Warhol film Kiss. Just having some friends come and it being kind of a full circle – from being a Warhol and Velvet Underground fan, never knowing I was going to have a show there.

What does 2020 hold for you?
It's open after the beginning of the year – I'm going to focus on a show that's going to open in New York, and after that I'm going to focus on putting a band together and rehearsing and doing some touring with that. And there's a bit of writing I want to get back to.

You've covered a lot of ground – music, art, writing, film, dance – is there a creative frontier you'd still like to cross?
I'm interested in avant-garde theatre – I'd maybe like to do a one-act play!

VICTORIA SEGAL

It's all gone to her head: (above) Gordon receives her Q Hero award from The Raincoats' Gina Birch (left) and Ana Da Silva.

MARCO VITTUR

Q CLASSIC SONGWRITER

KEVIN ROWLAND

PRESENTER: TIM BURGESS

The Dexys leader looks back on his best tunes, the controversy surrounding wearing a dress and why we shouldn't hold our breath for the band's next album...

Congratulations, Kevin, it was nice that you mentioned *[Dexys Midnight Runners co-founder]* Kevin Archer in your speech...

Without Kevin Archer you probably wouldn't know me. He wrote the music for Geno, that great riff, and even some of the vocal melody. I needed to do it, really. I probably should have done more of that. The media are very good at picking out lead singers and I'm good at taking all the credit!

Of the songs you've written over the years, is there a particular song that you're really proud of?

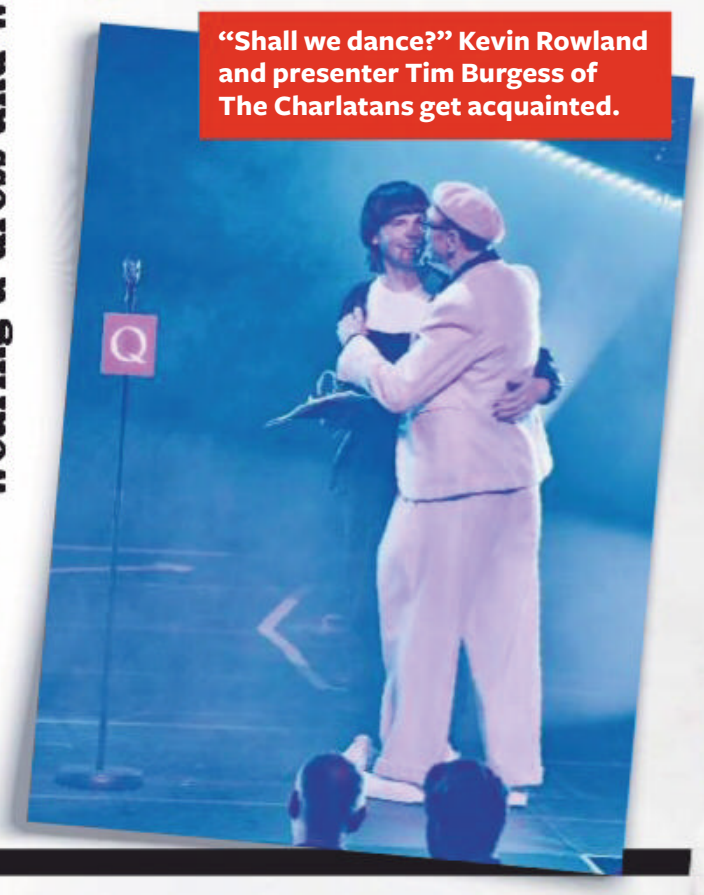
The '80s is so fucking long ago. It seems like another lifetime. This Is What She's Like. I don't think about it much, but if I had to pick one it would be that one.

What have you been up to this year?

I'm working on a reissue of *[1999 solo album]* My Beauty, which will be out next year some time. It's a bit of a passion for me because of how it was received at the time and what happened *[Rowland appeared in a dress and suspenders on the cover and was bottled offstage at that year's Reading Festival]*. I was really happy with the album but it was a big shock for people. I expected people to accept it, but it was a very different world then.

It's hard to imagine people reacting to a man wearing a dress in quite the same way in 2019.

Things have changed so much. The video we've just shot for *[My Beauty track]* Rag Doll tells the story of how it was received. My grandson Ru, he dresses in a way that is completely complementary to that. He's been doing that for years. He's 16 but really open-minded, wears really nice make-up. I walked into the studio where they were doing it and I saw him miming to the song, it was so fucking moving. He was carrying on



"Shall we dance?" Kevin Rowland and presenter Tim Burgess of The Charlatans get acquainted.

Pretty in pink: Classic Songwriter Kevin Rowland cuts a dash.

something that his grandad was doing before he was born. Back then it was something I felt I had to do. I saw a guy wearing a sarong around 1995 and thought it was a great look so I got a sarong and started wearing it with Roman sandals and started painting my nails, then one thing led to another.

People wanting to be accepted as non-binary has been a big issue recently.

Gender neutral, that phrase wasn't even around then. I wasn't saying I was a transvestite. I wasn't saying I wanted to be a woman. I was saying I was a man. I've got sideburns, I'm showing my fucking balls. I'm saying I'm a man who can wear a dress. I can wear whatever I want. That's what it was about.

Have you been involved in politics this year?

I did sign up to Extinction Rebellion. I'm trying not to get too involved in watching Brexit. I got a bit fucking obsessed with watching too much news, I was turning into my old man, just shouting at the TV.

[Madness approach]

Suggs: Kevin! You missed my speech about you, I was blue in the face talking about what an inspiration you've been. Blue in the fucking face!

Mike Barson: They really are great songs. When they played Come On Eileen *[on the intro VT]* I was just thinking what a brilliant song that is. All the stuff you've done is, but that one in particular.

Kevin Rowland: Thank you, mate. No more than yourself!

[Madness say their goodbyes and depart]

What's the best thing you've heard this year?

Little Simz, I think she's great. Really good.

Who's been your hero of the year?

Jeremy Corbyn. I like him, I like his politics. They've tried to destroy him in so many ways and he's still up there. I don't know how he's done it. He sticks to his principles. I don't want to see people sleeping in the fucking street, I don't want to see people paying so much rent that they can't afford to live in London. I don't want to see young people not being able to afford to buy a place. All that's got to be reversed.

Have you had any thoughts on new Dexys music?

None. I've got no interest in it, to be honest. I just don't feel motivated to do it. I'm really happy with the last two albums, but I have no desire to do anything after that. I felt really satisfied creatively with all of that. But if I do something now it would just be wrong, really. Yeah.

Is Dexys finished business for now then?

Yeah. It's a sabbatical. That's what Roxy Music said in '78 when they took a couple of years off. I thought that sounded great, I'd never even heard the fucking word before. *CHRIS CATCHPOLE*

MARCO VITTUR, GETTY, ANDREW COTTERILL

Q BEST FESTIVAL/EVENT

ALL POINTS EAST

On point: (clockwise from above) Bon Iver onstage at this year's All Points East; Christine with presenter Anne-Marie and (left) sparking up.

COLLECTED BY:
CHRISTINE AND THE QUEENS

PRESENTER:
ANNE-MARIE

All Points East took top honours this year, with Christine And The Queens' Héloïse Letissier picking up the award on the London festival's behalf.

»

THE ULTIMATE
SNEAKER INSOLES
NEW RANGE
Comfort
Impact
Sport
crep protect
insoles
Sport
AVAILABLE FROM
JD

Q INNOVATION IN SOUND

DIZZEE RASCAL

PRESENTER: **DJ SEMTEX**

The rapper who never looks back allows himself a moment of reflection.

You self-produced four of the five tracks on your last EP, Don't Gas Me. You also self-produced Boy In Da Corner when you were a teenager. How does it feel going back to that core part of your sound?

I love this, and I've done a lot more for the new album as well. At first, I don't know what I'm going to come up with. I'll never know where it's gonna turn or how people are going to take it. So it's like a return to that sense of fun, with no expectations, like back making beats in school. I'm also producing for a young MC called Wizzy – it's always nice to get other people on my beats, like when I started off on pirate radio making beats for people to MC over.

What's one thing you couldn't do without now that you didn't have then?

Back then I was using Logic, but now I use Ableton in the same way. There's so much you can do now, so many different ways to make beats, but I never get into it, because I just know how I use it. Other than that, I've actually got less now than I had 17 years ago. Now I just take my laptop to the studio.

What's one thing from 2019 that you'll always remember?

This! *[He grins across the room at Kano swaggering through swinging doors and at Edwyn Collins, having just complimented Dizzee on his award, posing affably for photos.]* Apart from that, just making this album. I've built the meat this year, and the standout moment was finishing another new song with Ocean Wisdom. It's a moment, it goes off.

Can you think of one thing you'd change?

Nah, not really. There's no point, because wherever the outcome is of whatever's happened, you just keep moving forward. If I could change it, I don't know what the outcome would be!

Who's your hero of 2019?

My mum.

Why's that?

Because she's my mum! And as you get older, you appreciate what your parents do for you. It's a constant realisation, as life goes on.

Why this year?

Because you asked me! I wasn't thinking about 2019: "Hmm, I love my mum!"

Boy In Da Corner is a consensus pick among the great modern albums. Would you put it up there, too?

I never thought about it like that. It's just some shit that I worked hard on when I was 17. Really hard. And then got on with my life straight away and put another album out within a year, Showtime. So I wasn't dwelling on it like that. I never have. *JAZZ MONROE*

"No photobombing, mate!" Dizzee Rascal, Suggs and man-in-the-middle Chris Foreman, outside the Roundhouse; (below) Dizzee with presenter DJ Semtex and (right) with his Innovation In Sound gong.

OLIVER HALFIN

"Bran Stark! Fancy being our new bassist?" Foals (from left, Edwin Congreave, Yannis Philippakis, presenter Isaac Hempstead Wright, Jack Bevan, Jimmy Smith) with their Best Album award.

Q BEST ALBUM

EVERYTHING NOT SAVED WILL BE LOST (PART 1)

by FOALS

PRESENTER: **ISAAC HEMPSTEAD WRIGHT**

Foals' frontman Yannis Philippakis may have driven himself crazy self-producing two albums in one year, but at least he has a prize to show for it.

Straight from the horse's mouth: Philippakis delivers Foals' acceptance speech; (below) their winning LP.

"I felt a little bit like someone had put me in a small chicken coop to look after an egg for a very long time." Yannis Philippakis

You've won the Best Album award for Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost – Part 1 in the same week that you're releasing Part 2. Do you feel a sense of achievement having undertaken a two-album project and pulled it off?
Yeah. For a while, even though we'd recorded it, it felt a bit hypothetical. These last few months, having the Q Awards and the Mercury Prize for Part 1 while Part 2 was about to come out, feels great, like everything has converged. I'm getting this feeling that we're going to look back on this year and realise what an achievement it was to put out two records.

Did you feel in limbo waiting for the second part to come out?
A little bit. I felt a little bit like someone had put me in a quite small chicken coop to look after an egg for a very long time.

What's the main difference between the two records? What made one track suitable for Part 1 but not Part 2?
I think Part 2 has a darker palette. Musically, the guitars are much more emphasised and the songs are kind of looking at the world from a more individual perspective. Lyrically, it's more first person.

There's environmental themes running through both records. Have you been on any marches this year?
Yeah, I've been to one in Trafalgar Square. But to be fair not that much, having been on tour for most of the year. I've got three months off now so I'm going to get more involved in it. Edwin *[Congreave, keyboardist]* has been locking it down, he's done almost every day at Extinction Rebellion this month.

It's been a year of young people leading the cause for activism – have you seen that first-hand as you've been travelling round the world?
Yeah, absolutely. I think awareness is growing and unless you're living under a rock, you're becoming more aware about the perilousness of the situation. I feel like the blinkers have fallen off society at large and certainly for myself I feel I've learned a lot this year, most of which is quite terrifying.

What will you always remember about 2019?
It's just gotta be about putting two albums out. Despite adversary and a sense of having a cartoon anvil over the head of the band for periods of time after *[former bassist]* Wally's departure and then kind of driving myself crazy trying to self-produce the album and not sleeping at all and spending a lot of time in pubs, at the end of it we came out with something that we feel proud of and we feel is exciting and meaningful and rocks.

Did you have any resolutions at the start of the year and did you stick to them?
I wanted to quit smoking, but I've failed at that. I smashed two packs yesterday.

Shouldn't you be looking after your voice?
Yeah, I'm singing like a bird these days.

Who's your hero of the year?
It's got to be Greta Thunberg, hasn't it?

What's the most astonishing thing you've seen this year?
Can I choose a play? I saw Faith, Hope And Charity by Alexander Zeldin at *[London's]* National Theatre.

You've got a tour doc coming out titled Rip Up The Road. Did you learn anything from watching it?
That I need to lay off the pints! I've not seen the final cut yet but I found it quite moving realising we've created something out of friendship. Music has become our lives and it was super cool to feel that watching the doc. *NIALL DOHERTY* »

MARCO VITTUR

"We've become very close..."

Game Of Thrones actor Isaac Hempstead Wright on why his mates are worthy winners of Q Best Album.

If you could choose one song or album to be saved from 2019, what would it be?
It's got to be the Foals LP *[Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost]* Part 1. I've been mates with the boys for years, but all bias aside, I think it is one of the best records out there. I met them at Reading in 2015 and then bumped into them at various events. Then I moved to the same area as them by chance and bought a flat on the same road as Jack *[Bevan, drummer]*. So we've become very close.

So Foals didn't pick you for the Exits video because of your fencing skills, then?
No! We were at the pub and they went, "Isaac, you should come to Budapest and shoot this video" and I just went, "I'm in!"

Is it strange having to look for work again after Game Of Thrones finished this year?
Yeah, I've got no safety blanket any more. But it's quite exciting to have shed that skin and be fresh and new in the world.

The last episode was one of the TV events of 2019...
Well, maybe my mates aren't telling me the truth, but everyone I spoke to thought it was great. My parents loved it! I thought it was good and everyone in the cast too. I know we'll be biased, but we've worked on this show for 10 years and we all thought it was pretty good, so I'm happy enough with that.

You said when it finished you would return to university. Have you?
Yes, I was at lectures this morning. So far I've managed to slip under the radar. It's been picked up by one or two places, but it's OK. So I won't tell you where I am, if that's OK? Everyone who has recognised me has been very sweet. I'm enjoying being back doing neuroscience...

A nice easy subject to pick up again...
Yeah, piece of piss! *PAUL STOKES*

A WORD FROM YOUR HOST

NADINE SHAH

It might have been her debut presenting gig but the Geordie singer-songwriter had the room in the palm of her hand. Now to finish off that new LP…

You've just presented the Q Awards. How was it?
You know what, I was so nervous but it was a room full of lovely, kind people. I enjoyed it. The nerves were awful beforehand but they went. Kim Gordon, Stormzy, all these artists that I love, what a lovely night. There didn't seem much ego present.

Has it given you the taste to do more?
Presenting, no. Maybe Q again if they ask me, otherwise no. This is unique to me. I'm not a voice for hire. I chose to do this because last year I enjoyed the ceremony so much.

How has your year been?
Very quiet. A family member is ill, so I've taken time off work and moved back up to the North East. That's why I don't take jobs lightly now, they have to be worth it if I'm going to take time away from my loved ones. I'm not going to do shit. That's why I did this, but it's been so quiet this year and it's been lovely spending time with my family. The new album is nearly finished, too. I've been working off and on, but it's nearly done.

If you could choose one song or album to be saved from 2019, what would it be?
I'm a massive fan of Stormzy, from meeting him, things I'd heard and watching him at Glastonbury. People keep talking about new punk bands at the moment, and I truly love the bands around now, but there's no-one as fucking punk as Stormzy. He is the definition of punk. He properly documents the times he lives in. I find him so inspiring and I love him. His musical output *[the singles Vossi Bop, Sounds Of The Skeng and Crown]* in 2019 is my favourite for many years. When I see a performer like that it serves a great purpose for me as a musician, in that it really puts a fire in my belly! There's no jealousy it just makes me go, "Right, I need to do more!"

Q Awards presenter Nadine Shah (centre) with Christine and Matty Healy.

Did you have any New Year's resolutions at the beginning of the year? Did you stick to them?
I kind of did. Previously, I would do this thing which is caustic and bad for anyone's mental health, but I realised that a lot of the goals I had set in my head were career-based. Because of the illness in my family I realised how important my friends are, my mental health is and my family are, so I've made a concerted effort to be as kind to everyone and anyone as possible, I know in return I'll receive it. It might sound a bit twee, but I really mean it and I hope I've stuck to it, I really do. It's the thing I live by. *PAUL STOKES*

Cheers! A BIG THANK YOU TO…

The Q Awards 2019 were produced by: Helen Scott and Marguerite Peck at Winter French, Dave Henderson, Ted Kessler, Niall Doherty and Joel Stephan.

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“THE ALBUMS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE”

GIRL RAY

The indie-pop trio on the records that shaped them.

JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE
JUSTIFIED (2002)

Poppy Hankin: “It’s so of its time, the production on it is *so* Pharrell. He’s such an incredible producer, his use of instruments and melodies. It’s from a period of pop music that I love listening to and dancing to... in the cluuuuuub! I was probably dancing to it at kids’ birthday parties when it first came out. When we made our new album, we were going back to ’90s and noughties R&B, that Max Martin-style pop which has a special place in my heart. Really expertly crafted beats and production. I’m into it.”

JONATHAN RICHMAN
HER MYSTERY NOT OF HIGH HEELS AND EYE SHADOW (2001)

Iris McConnell: “To be honest, it’s the only Jonathan Richman record I really, really like. I don’t actually know him a lot aside from this. When I was in my late teens I was having a hard time socialising and trying to be an adult and I would come home and listen to this and feel good again. I still do that now if I’m feeling nervous or anxious, I just put it on. I like his naivety and when he sings in Spanish it’s really cute. And he’s in There’s Something About Mary, that’s definitely his best work to date.”

ROSALÍA
EL MAL QUERER (2018)

PH: “I love her. I had a dream about her last night, actually. That album, especially from a production sense, the beats on it are so cool and her voice is incredible and really hits me in the heart. She’s such a powerful singer. I have no idea what she’s singing about but it’s the kind of music where you can feel what they’re singing about. She could be singing about a trip to the zoo but it still makes me cry. It’s a fusion that really, really works even though it shouldn’t. It’s really clever. It floats my boat.”

PREFAB SPROUT
SWOON (1984)

Sophie Moss: “I came across this a few years ago. I didn’t really know about Prefab Sprout but then I became obsessed with them. They’re just the best band in the world, aren’t they?”
PH: “*Yeeah?*”
SM: “It’s the perfect, sophisticated indie-pop album and it’s kind of weird. He has such a weird way of crafting songs. I think it’s amazing. Every time I hear Prefab Sprout it makes me want to get up and sing and dance. It just makes me uncontrollably happy.”

ARTHUR RUSSELL
LOVE IS OVERTAKING ME (2008)

IM: “I listen to it constantly, it never gets boring and there’s a song for every mood. For a lot of songs you apply the lyrics to your own situation, but with Arthur Russell he has such a strong voice of his own that I never imagine it for myself. It’s really nice to play early in the morning.”
SM: “There’s a song for every moment of the day on that record.”
IM: “I listen to it before I go to sleep as well. I think about him dying.”
PH: “Jesus.”

CALVIN HARRIS
FUNK WAV BOUNCES VOL. 1 (2017)

PH: “It has Feels on it. I was obsessed with that song. I would play it in my bed and just pulse around, my legs wiggling. I couldn’t go to sleep because I needed to listen to it one more time. I got into the whole record through that and didn’t get bored of it for like a year. The production is very ’70s but also very modern. Even though Feels was a massive hit the whole album is underrated. He does the EDM crazy Ibiza DJing but this was a one-off record for him where he showed that he could do it all. I love it. Every song’s a hit.”

DAFT PUNK
DISCOVERY (2001)

SM: “Daft Punk changed my life. I was just astounded by what music could do. It’s got One More Time on it which was such a universal massive hit but every song is completely amazing. It’s a rare thing that an album that everyone loves is actually that good. When I was a kid I wasn’t allowed to go and see them because I was too young and it ruined my whole life. All my family went and still go on about how it was the best show ever. I had to sleep at my friend’s house and was crying the whole night.”

ARIANA GRANDE
SWEETENER (2018)

IM: “It really opened my eyes to the pop universe of today. I’m just in awe of her.”
PH: “You were a latecomer to Ariana as well...”
IM: “Yeah, I didn’t like her at all and now I love everything she’s done.”
PH: “When we all went to see her a couple of months ago we were all in hysterics, like almost crying, screaming.”
IM: “We caught someone filming us.”
IM: “Her message is really good as well. She’s a very positive person.”

WORDS: CHRIS CATCHPOLE PHOTO: MARCO VITTUR

Spinning class: Girl Ray (from left, Sophie Moss, Iris McConnell, Poppy Hankin) with their fantastic plastic, Jelly Records, East London, October 2019.

"Ariana Grande's message is really good. She's a very positive person." Iris McConnell

KESHA

Through the looking glass: Kesha, East London, 8 October, 2019.

Reflections Of A Pop Phoenix

It's been five years since Kesha launched a lawsuit against Dr Luke, modern pop's super-producer who discovered her as a teenager a decade earlier. Her suit alleged sexual assault and unfair business practice, and he counter-sued. Now, after years of stasis and stress, she makes her return. Sylvia Patterson hears her tale…

Photography: Marco Vittur

Kesha explodes through the door like a funkadelic cartoon superhero: fluorescent orange faux-fur tiger striped overcoat, newly dark hair sprouting from a blue vinyl visor with Gucci in red sequins, eyes surrounded by multi-coloured stars, a third eye metallic circle glued between her eyebrows, acrylic nails silver and encrusted. No wonder, in 2017, backstage at a Delaware festival, her all-time hero Bob Dylan was similarly boggled, admiring her custom–made Nudie suit (the rhinestone couture legend which clothed '70s Elvis), featuring rainbow sleeve tassels and elaborate embroiders (tiger's head, bottle of booze).

"He commented multiple times, 'Man, that is a fabulous suit,'" she beams, furry arms shooting into the air. "Yes! He sent me his book Chronicles, it said, 'It was so nice to meet you.' I have it hanging in my house."

It's the pyjamas beneath her fabulous coat today, though, that say the most about America's most publicly embattled pop renegade: a black, satin two-piece with its outer pocket customised at her request with two silver words: Fuck It.

Kesha, now 32, is exactly what you'd want from a pop star: a sweary, boozy, bawdy personality who calls herself "a freedom fighter", in stirring contrast to her often drearily earnest, self-consciously controlled American peers. It's a crime against culture alone, then, that for much of her 10-year career – since her gleefully trashy, electro-pop/hip-hop American Number 1 debut album Animals in 2010 – she's been the opposite of free, incarcerated in a murky pop machine saga. It's been five long years since her lawsuit against the man who discovered her aged 17 in 2004, American super-producer Dr Luke, aka Lukasz Gottwald (Pink, Britney Spears, Katy Perry, Rihanna). Her 2014 civil lawsuit accused him of sexual assault (rape, involving date rape drugs), alongside unfair business practice and verbal, physical and emotional abuse (she claims he'd call her "a fat fucking refrigerator", exacerbating already fragile body issues leading to two months in rehab in 2014 for extreme eating disorders and depression). All accusations were denied by Gottwald who issued a defamation lawsuit for a (reportedly) whopping $50million, claiming the accusations were a malicious attempt to release her from her contract with his Kemosabe label (a Sony imprint). From 2015-16 she was creatively shut down, until Gottwald was no longer CEO of Kemosabe in 2017, though she remains bound by her contract today. Years of allegations, countersuits, injunctions, appeals and depositions have ensued, an online #FreeKesha campaign emerged in 2016, the year her sexual abuse allegations were dismissed by a judge in the New York Supreme Court. With Gottwald's defamation case now on course to be heard next year, Kesha is legally forbidden to publicly discuss any lawsuit details (she hasn't mentioned Gottwald by name for years) but her spirit in 2019, in public at least, is defiant.

"I have given myself permission to grab myself by the balls again and be, 'This is who I am, a happy person,'" she declares, legs fully stretched out along a grey sofa in a white, featureless suite of London's Metropolitan Hotel. "As long as I stay in the present moment I'm *usually* good. As soon as I think about the future, the past, it's not good."

Her post-wilderness third album Rainbow in 2017 announced her break-for-freedom, her sometime signature sound (Auto-Tuned vocals, surface fun) obliterated by powerhouse pipes and feminist fury. Her scorched-earth performance of the stunning redemption ballad Praying at 2018's Grammys becoming an iconic moment. "You put me through hell... and we both know all the truth I could tell," she sang of Gottwald, unambiguously, backed by a #MeToo-supporting white-clad platoon of peers (including Cyndi Lauper and Camila Cabello), an experience she describes today as "terrifying". In 2019, no fear is detectable, her fourth album High Road the definition of the words, Fuck It. The seven tracks Q hears are both joyous party-hard anthems ("fucking *pop bangers*" she grins) and profoundly moving country-soul, co-written

"There was a time where I thought I would never know what happiness felt like ever again."

GETTY

(Left) #FreeKesha protesters outside Sony HQ in New York, 2016; (right) onstage at the 2018 Grammys.

"I'm a freedom fighter": Kesha ends her creative exile in style, London, 2019.

with contemporaries, including Dan Reynolds of Imagine Dragons and Wrabel (alongside her Nashville songwriter mother Pebe Sebert). My Own Dance is euphoric, thundering righteous-pop, addressing her public persona. "We get that you've been through a lot of shit," she announces, "but life's a bitch, so come on, shake your tits and fuck it... you're the party girl, you're the tragedy, but the funny thing is, I'm fucking everything!" It's a declaration of both her multi-fold personality and musical reach and not, you know, sexual enthusiasm. "Oh," she blinks. "That did not cross my mind. But it doesn't bother me!"

A defiant energy dominates, High Road declaring, "I'm taking the high road, high as fuck and these assholes won't shut up", while Raising Hell (featuring rapper Big Freedia) contains the arrestingly saucy line: "Good girls know how to get hard, too." Two gorgeous country-soul ballads temper the provocations: Resentment, featuring backing vocals from The Beach Boys' Brian Wilson ("I don't hate you babe," she laments, "it's worse than that") while Father/Daughter Dance contemplates how life might have been, had she grown up with a father: "Would he have protected me from all of the bad shit, the bad men?" Another song, unheard, which she won't yet name, explores "fun sex, in a relationship." Can she give us her best line?

"OK," she laughs. "'You like to put on my dress, I like to put on your boots.' We'll leave it at that! I wrote that song with two men I trust very much. And never felt odd or disrespected. I'm not giving up my ability to be sexual. I'm still a young woman."

If Kesha has moved beyond her traumatic years, much of planet pop hasn't, her name permanently associated with what she calls "my tragedy", a figurehead for the #MeToo movement which her lawsuit pre-empted by three years. Sisterhood solidarity has seen supportive voices in Ariana Grande, Adele, Iggy Azalea, Lorde, Lena Dunham, Lily Allen, Miley Cyrus and Taylor Swift, who donated $250,000 to her colossal legal fees. This January, Lady Gaga was subpoenaed to give defamation case evidence over text exchanges where Kesha confided about the alleged rape. Gaga declared that such situations in the music industry are "kept extremely secret, compounded by contracts and manipulative power scenarios." Gottwald's lawyer asked, "You weren't there, correct?" to which Gaga retorted: "Why on earth would this girl tell the entire world this happened? Do you know what it's like for survivors? Don't you roll your eyes at me. You should be ashamed of yourself." It's a high-profile struggle for »

She’s got her third eye on you: the fully funkadelic Kesha.

Starting out: in 2010, the year of her debut LP.

justice which threatens to define not only Kesha's career but her actual life, forever. Does she feel like it defines her?

"There are certain things in life," she replies, now choosing her words meticulously carefully, "that you may never get over. *But*. I don't have to sit in my tragedy. Because that's not where I'm at. Right now."

She sips from a glass of water, the palms of her hands inked with huge tattoos (an eye on one, Saturn on the other).

"There was a time where I never thought I would know what happiness felt like ever again," she notes, bluntly. "But I've done a *lot* of therapy on this. I'm allowed to have had bad things happen to me. I'm also allowed to be happy. Because *fuck that*. I'm alive. Life is short. And I can, although probably never get over it, move on."

Self-motivational speeches underpin much of Kesha's conversation. She's evangelical about therapy. "It taught me everything" she says, adding, "We all suffer in the condition of being human." When #MeToo emerged in 2017, she felt "nauseous that so many people had been sexually assaulted that it required... a *movement*." She contemplates whether #MeToo has changed the music industry.

"Personally, the people I choose to work with are incredibly respectful and kind, they've become some of my closest friends and most of them are *men*," she emphasises. "So in my mind, yes. And people can change. I'm not speaking about sexual assault in this moment, I want to be clear, I'm just saying change is possible. Learn from mistakes you have made, and know it's not OK to treat people a certain way. And also know it's OK to stand up and say, 'I'm not OK with being treated a certain way.'"

Kesha Rose Sebert was born into music in LA, her songwriter mum Pebe (now 63, who co-wrote for Dolly Parton) her lifelong inspirational template whom Kesha describes as "a badass, a hippy, a *motherfucking woman*". Pebe, at the end of her seven-year marriage, with a son Lagan (she was, notes Kesha, "over men"), sought out a sexual relationship for procreation alone, timed for a Pisces child – "she wanted a water punk baby," marvels Kesha (mum and daughter are both Pisces) – and adopted her youngest son, Sage, now 20. Relocated to Nashville, aged four, Kesha grew up around recording studios, was bullied at school, her family seen as welfare-reliant weirdos. Kesha made her own clothes, had purple hair, avoided classmates by eating lunch alone in the bathroom.

"I was never a cool girl at school," she nods. "Even in the music business, I've always felt like this weirdo outcast." Her musical heroes from aged 10 were fellow rock'n'roll renegades: Bowie, Marc Bolan, Captain Beefheart, Bob Dylan, Beastie Boys, Blondie (she's now worked with both Iggy Pop and Alice Cooper). A fledgling songwriter, she rebelled against Nashville's country standard, "I wanted to talk shit *[rap]* and make people dance their ass off." Moving to LA, she befriended the Eagles Of Death Metal and, once, while smoking weed with the band, punched one of their friends in the face for grabbing her breast. She sang vocals on Flo Rida's US Number 1 hit single Right Round for which she was paid nothing (her initial stage name Ke$ha she chose as a poverty piss-take). A free-spirited teenager she continuously travelled alone, visited Cuba alone, "and I'd jump on a Greyhound bus to see bands by myself." At 17, she was set for New York's liberal arts college Barnard (studying psychology and religion) when she was discovered by Dr Luke, her debut single TiK ToK announcing she brushed her teeth "with a bottle of Jack" (the best-selling single globally in 2010). A lifetime in music has left her, she says, in some ways developmentally arrested ("I'm a really shit cook") and she spent no time alone for years, finding the constant recognition post-TiK ToK "scary, as a woman." She struggles, still, with food issues and body image, believing for years she couldn't be a real pop star unless she was reed-thin, starved herself, was bulimic and suicidal.

"It's OK to stand up and say, 'I'm not OK with being treated a certain way.'"

"Yes and I'm *pissed-off* about that," she frowns. "I am pissed-off for my younger self and for other people who feel that. Your body is your business, nobody else's. Will I ever be totally free from it? Probably not. Much like when you're in AA, you're in it for life. So I have to deal with any thoughts that come up, where I scrutinise myself, and breathe through it. But society is changing, I see more inclusivity, in accepting people the way they are."

Kesha was a righteous millennial social warrior long before the term was mainstream, her lifetime's "dispositions" reinforced on this summer's single Rich White Straight Men, a riot of chanting prank-pop dissecting equality, Trump's border wall and LGBTQ+ rights. "It sounds like a bad acid trip, because that's politically what the world feels like right now." She lives in Venice, LA, has four cats, is vegetarian, has called herself bisexual but lives with her long-term boyfriend, writer Brad Ashenfelter, a long-haired surfer-dude dreamboat who she calls, "a sweetheart, a really kind man... and he's easy on the eye." A pair of ocean-loving hippies, you might also call them nature »

Back behind the wheel: (above) scenes from Kesha's new subtext-heavy Raising Hell video, featuring her meting out justice to an abusive foe.

Kick out the jams! Kesha performs on Jimmy Kimmel Live, LA, 28 October, 2019.

"It's my personal mission in life just to feel free. And I'm not gonna let any person, or anything I've been through, take that away from me."

punks. "That's *exactly* what we are!" she hollers. "We're in nature and then go see Iggy Pop together, it's awesome." She believes in pop's escapist power – "it's like a magical trick" – and since 2017 has been "learning how to be alone again", driving three hours recently to see Neil Young in LA. "By myself, just like I used to do when I was 17." It's a thought which prompts another self-motivational speech.

"It's my personal mission in life just to feel free," she declares. "And I'm not gonna let any situation, or any person, or anything I've been through, take that away from me."

Hence your pyjamas.

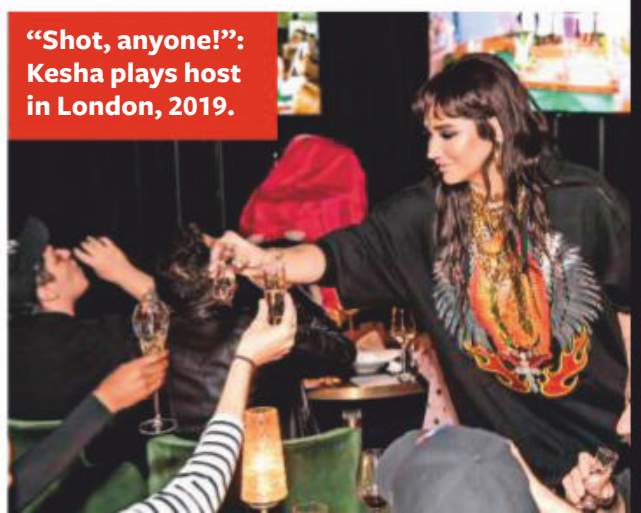
"Hence Fuck It," she smiles, clutching her pyjama top, now unbuttoned, her black, lacy bra on display. "Whoops! *Fuck it*."

At 4pm the following day, Kesha sits on a stage, alone, in the jazz-cool Arts Club in London's Mayfair, tequila shot in hand, wearing a black smock with a glittering fire motif. She's introducing tracks from High Road, some of which celebrate "getting super-fucking high... shall we?" She's in performance mode, a campy saloon-girl stand-up thrilling a roomful of journalists and PRs drinking flutes of free champagne. She unveils the Raising Hell video, a black comedy caper where she kills a man whose hands were around her throat. There's a car chase, she's arrested, her face on a WANTED poster. "I have a good heart but I like to do *bad things*," she says, with a glimmer. "And before I'm six feet under I'd like to raise some hell." Despite the surely history-referencing video, she uses a phrase, three times, which has clearly lodged in her psyche. "I don't have to be defined by my past." If she keeps saying it enough, it seems, it just might come true.

"If you're alive, you got it all," she declares. "So, fucking embrace it. And... hands up if you want a shot!"

Trays of free tequila are circulated as she bounces around the room offering a "cheers!" to every table. She glances at a replay of the Raising Hell video, at the exact moment of her fictional assailant's murder: "Whoops, I just killed somebody!" Soon, she's inside the Arts Club loos. "I brought the party in here," she cackles. A jostling crowd of well-wishers thrust phones in her face for selfies. "It's a bit much," notes one, concerned, but Kesha does not care. "A bit much," she hoots, "that's my middle name!"

Three days later on 10 October, news emerges that this 26 September, a New York appellate court denied Kesha her latest appeal against Gottwald's defamation suit. A tweet from Dan Reynolds from Imagine Dragons then calls for an industry-wide boycott of Dr Luke "unless he drops his lawsuit against @KeshaRose." The trial looks set for 2020, when Kesha will appear as the defendant. Her freedom mission continues.



"Shot, anyone!": Kesha plays host in London, 2019.

GETTY; CARSTEN WINDHORST

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Q Review

THE WORLD'S BIGGEST & BEST MUSIC GUIDE

EDITED BY CHRIS CATCHPOLE

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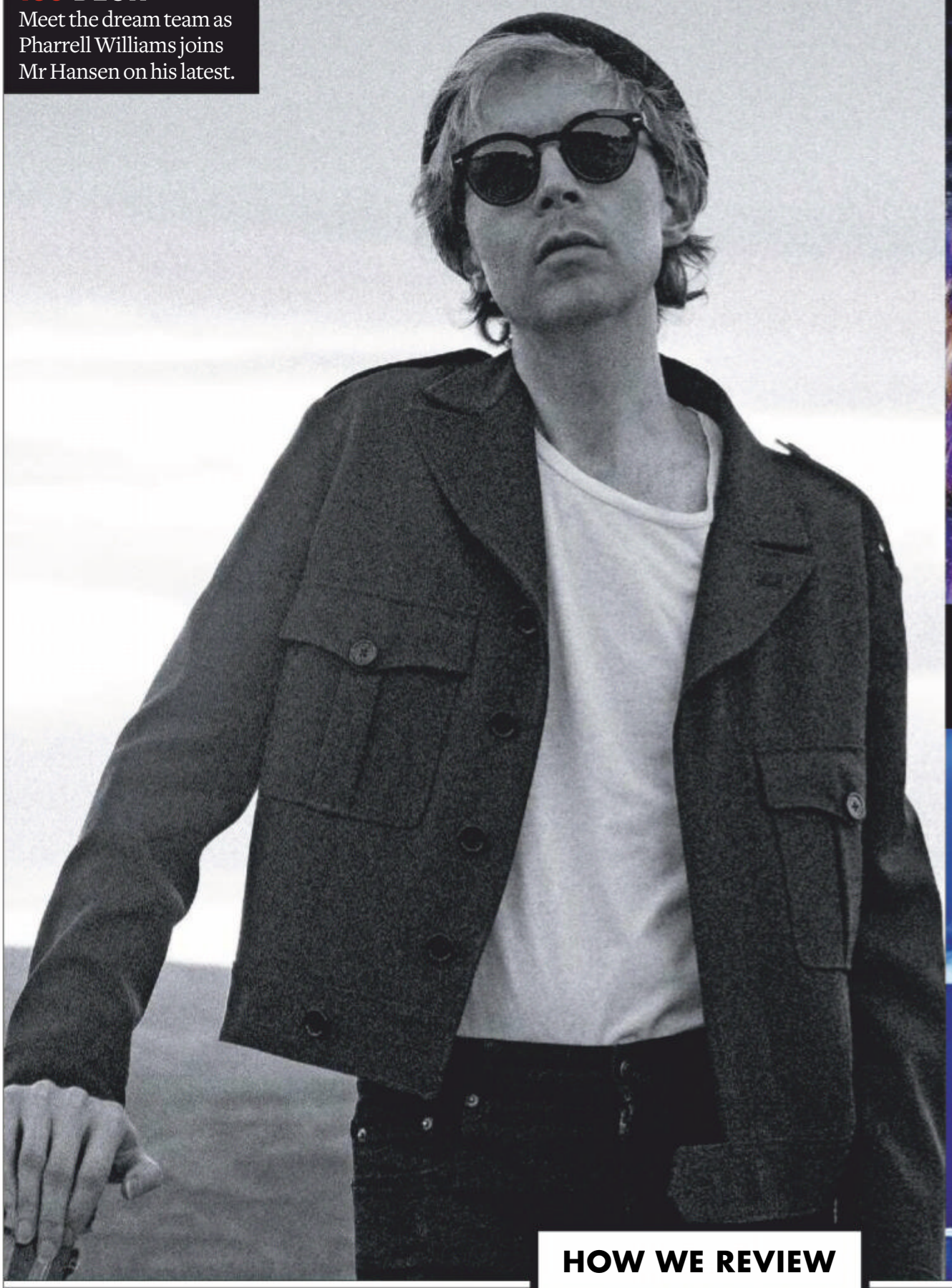
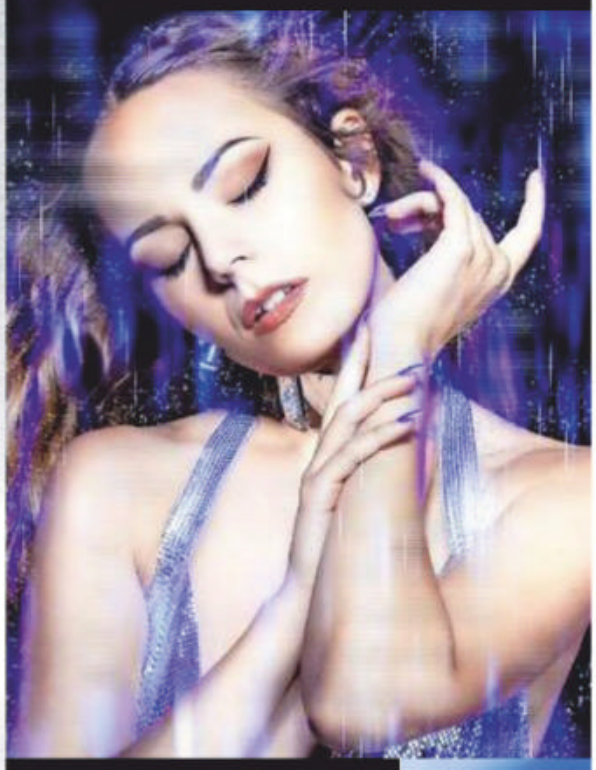




OLIVER HALFIN

HOW WE REVIEW

The Q Review is the definitive music guide. Its hand-picked writers are the undisputed experts in their fields, and they rigorously adhere to Q's world-famous star-rating system.

★★★★★ **CLASSIC**
This is a work of genius. Essential for any collection.

★★★★ **GOOD**
Solid as a rock. You will not be let down.

★★★ **FAIR**
A decent attempt, but not ripe. Investigate at your own peril.

★★ **POOR**
Ill-conceived, under-cooked. Please return to the drawing board.

★ **RUBBISH**
This will boil your blood with fury and disgust.

WINNING FORMULA

Dance duo continue to galvanise with a mix of Balkan-rockin' beats and brain-melting visuals.

THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS
DOM SPORTOVA, ZAGREB
12 OCTOBER, 2019
★★★★

A large painting hangs on the wall of The Chemical Brothers' dressing room, deep within the concrete guts of Zagreb's Dom Sportova sporting arena. Its kinetic slashes and colourful daubs are at odds with this venue's brutalist '70s leisure centre vibe. It looks like it belongs somewhere else entirely. Which, it turns out, it does.

"It's from Lithuania," says Ed Simons, the dark-haired half of The Chemical Brothers, welcoming Q into the dressing room. He and his musical partner of 30 years Tom Rowlands saw it when they played there several years ago and badgered the local promoter until he told them to just take it. Now it comes with them everywhere they play. It even has its own roadie. "Our monitor engineer makes sure it's in every dressing room," says Simons. "It's become a bit of a thing."

Simons and Rowlands seem far too sensible to be superstitious, but it turns out that sprucing up dressing rooms with abstract Eastern European artwork isn't the only ritual they have. There's the pre-show skank the pair of them perform. And there are the two pieces of pitta bread that Rowlands deliberately burns in a toaster each

night before a gig. "There's no real reason for it." he says. "Other people put everything out in their dressing room in a certain way and don't use it. I burn two pitta bread." He looks over at the food table. "I can't actually see any here," he says, mildly concerned.

Whatever juju the hanging of the painting and the burning of the pitta conjures, it's working. Of all the big beasts of the '90s electronic music scene, the pair's career trajectory has been the steadiest: less combustible than The Prodigy, more willing to hold the centre ground than Underworld. A quarter of a century after forging their reputation at fabled London club night the Heavenly Sunday Social, they occupy a rarefied position in the modern pop pantheon as an arena-dance juggernaut.

The cause has been helped by their knack of being all things to all people: avatars for head-nodding crate diggers everywhere; hands-in-the-air rave kingpins; post-modern psychedelists; indie-club dancefloor fillers. This broad-spectrum approach is reflected in the make-up of tonight's audience. A four-foot square sample near the mixing desk produces a Zagrebian hipster in tweed three-piece, a gyrating dancer who looks like she's stepped off the cover of a '90s dance compilation and a couple of early 20-somethings in Iron Maiden T-shirts.

"We've noticed that we get a young crowd, not just rave mums and dads," says Simons. "We saw Danny DeVito and his family at a show once," adds Rowlands. "He's a bit of a raver, DeVito." »

They've got balls: The Chemical Brothers, plus giant inflatables, Dom Sportova, Zagreb, Croatia, 12 October, 2019.

This year's No Geography was a conscious attempt to bottle that unifying spirit. Not necessarily musically – No Geography largely took everything back to a core techno/hip-hop/funk axis, dispensing with headline-grabbing A-list guest spots (Norwegian art-pop singer Aurora was as famous as it got). But its central tenet offered a rock to cling to in these troubled times: Brexit is shit, Trump is a twat, music is the one thing that really brings us together. Still, there's a sneaking suspicion that that hippy-in-raver's-clothing message might be lost on the majority of a Croatian audience who have come here to dance and be dazzled by the all-out, retina-frying digital barrage that is the current Chemical Brothers live experience.

That barrage doesn't let up for the duration of tonight's two-hour show. As opener Go propels itself from the starting blocks, a parade of humanoid figures rendered in vivid pink grid-mapped form begin to twist and pirouette across the screen. It's an AV battering that's dizzying and exhilarating at the same time.

No Geography highlight MAH is deployed early; here, its aggro-charged riff on 1976 man-on-the-edge movie Network ("I'm mad as hell, I ain't gonna take it no more") is amplified to the point of psychosis. A hypnotic snatch of EML Ritual brings the heat down a level, though the images of crawling insects and twitching bodies that accompany its, "I don't know what to do/I'm going to lose my mind" mantra don't exactly scream "par-tay!" Still, that's not quite as weird as the footage of dancers bundled up and vamping like disco larvae that provide the backdrop to Got To Keep On. If that wasn't disconcerting enough, the song concludes with a confetti-storm that erupts from a pair of cannons on either side of the floor.

The audio and visual elements of the show mesh perfectly – unsurprising, given the latter was conceived by long-time collaborator Adam Smith, now a big-shot TV director. The giant disembodied head of Aurora intones Eve Of Destruction's end-of-days pessimism from the screen, though the pill is sugared by its quasi-euphoric electro-house rush, sounding even more massive here than it does on record. No Geography itself takes a more obviously uplifting tack, hitching glittering '80s-style synths to a sample of American poet Michael Brownstein's spoken-word track Geography: "Me, you... him, her... I'll take you along with me." Maybe we're not so screwed after all, seems to be the message.

Wisely, the pair don't try to compete with their own spectacle, though Simons does venture out front to urge on the crowd at strategic points. "I even have tape on the floor to tell me where to stand," he'd said earlier, one of the few concessions they make to traditional gig protocols. During Hey Boy Hey Girl, which sounds even sharper than it did in 1999, he and Rowlands are encased in a cage of green lasers, while the ever-propulsive Star Guitar – merged with their wired cover of New Order's Temptation – comes accompanied by a bank of strobe lights that's one part superclub, one part prison break.

Ironically, for all the digital dazzle, it's a pair of IRL stage effects that draws the biggest cheers. The first comes when two giant toy robots descend from the ceiling at the climax of Escape Velocity, laser beams firing from their eyes. An even louder roar greets the enormous balloons that bounce across the audience's heads during Saturate. It's momentarily less a gig, more a chemically charged kids' party.

This iteration of the Chemical Brothers live show has been honed at big outdoor festivals, and the all-guns-blazing approach necessary in that environment is fully in place tonight. Deep cut Hoops forgoes any build-up and cuts straight to its skull-rattling mid-section, while the only moment of anything vaguely approaching respite comes with the blissful, Beck-fronted Wide Open, dropped towards the end of the set as reward for making it this far. That turns out to be just a momentary breather before a mutant Galvanize is mashed, via a burst of C-H-E-M-I-C-A-L and Leave Home, into Block Rockin' Beats. Suddenly it's the '90s again, a feeling compounded not long afterwards by a climactic Private Psychedelic Reel, which still sounds like the ultimate Britpop-era wigout, even in a Soviet-era sporting arena.

Half an hour later, Simons and Rowlands are back in their dressing room, entertaining a handful of guests.

The days when such places would be sardined with complete strangers reading ecstasy-inspired poetry or trying to recruit the duo into swivel-eyed religious cults are long gone. "I miss the poetry," says Simons fondly. "But not having a dressing room full of people I don't know." Rowlands admits that the promoter failed to deliver any pitta bread, though the painting – currently being unhooked from the wall by a roadie – was clearly enough to work its magic on its own. After all this time, The Chemical Brothers don't need hoodoo to help them out. Two hours of exhilaration and a couple of giant toy robots will do just fine. *DAVE EVERLEY*

SETLIST

Go
Free Yourself
Chemical Beats
MAH
EML Ritual
Swoon
Temptation/ Star Guitar/ Gravity Drops
Got To Keep On
Hey Boy Hey Girl
Eve Of Destruction
Saturate
Elektrobank
No Geography
Escape Velocity/The Golden Path
Hoops/Get Up On It Like This
Dig Your Own Hole/Under The Influence
Wide Open
Galvanize/ C-H-E-M-I-C-A-L
Leave Home
Block Rockin' Beats

Encore

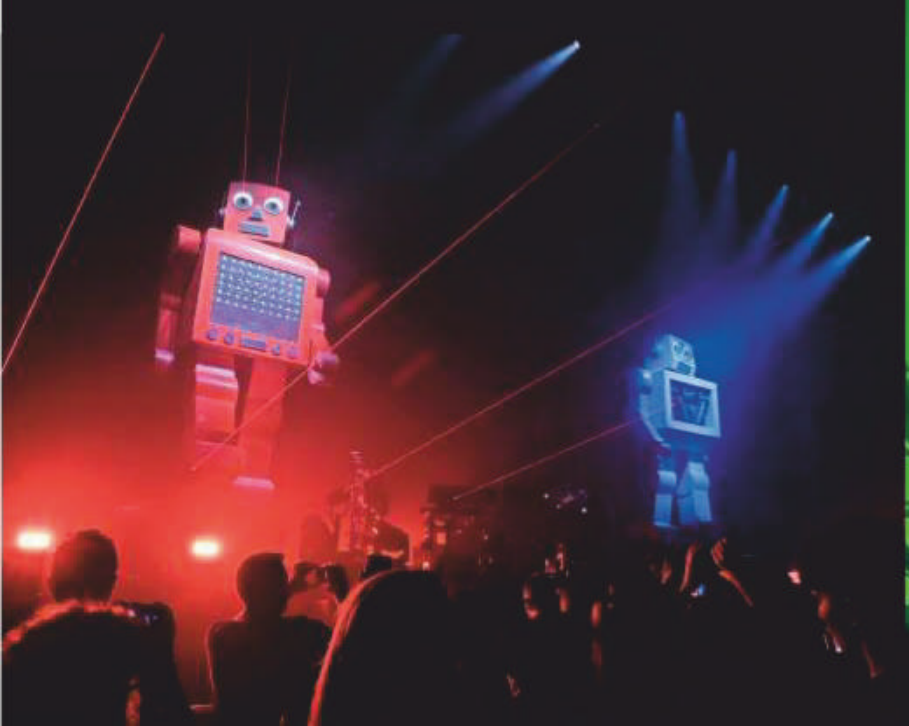
Got Glint?
Catch Me I'm Falling
The Private Psychedelic Reel

"We saw Danny DeVito and his family at a show once. He's a bit of a raver." Tom Rowlands

"Fancy a night on the tiles, mate?" Ed Simons (left) and Tom Rowlands backstage in Zagreb.

ANDREW COTTERILL

Chemically enhanced: Rowlands and Simons conjure an audio-visual extravaganza in the Croatian capital.



GREAT SCOTS

Rock trio take time out of the studio for intimate Q Awards show.

BIFFY CLYRO

THE ROUNDHOUSE, LONDON
15 OCTOBER, 2019
★★★★

It's a blustery night in mid-October but that doesn't stop hardened Biffy Clyro fans waiting in the queue for the Roundhouse's doors to open. They could find solace in the warm pub across the road but in line they wait, a long row of fans stretching a quarter of a mile down Chalk Farm Road in North London. This is what tonight, the Scottish trio's first fully-electric London headline show since they completed the tour to support their 2016 album Ellipsis, means to the band's devotees. Getting in early to witness this special pre-Q Awards show up close is a must.

In a way, though, they will all be up close. This is Biffy Clyro's smallest plugged-in show in years – they played the same venue for an MTV Unplugged appearance in 2017 – and a chance to look into the eyes of a group who are now fully established as arena and festival headliners.

As fans stand in the cold, Biffy Clyro frontman Simon Neil is inside his dressing room undergoing his regular pre-gig routine. His bandmates James and Ben Johnston hang out in the various rooms down the backstage corridor behind the Roundhouse's stage, but Neil has a particular method to get him stage-ready. His tequila drinking begins two hours before the show, followed by some vocal warm-ups. When the doors open, he starts to get into the headspace required for the controlled chaos of a Biffy Clyro show. "Once the crowd start coming in, that's when I get a little more Zen," he says.

Biffy Clyro are hardened road dogs but Neil could be forgiven for feeling out of practice tonight. The band have

OLIVER HALFIN

"We've been in absolute hibernation for the last 18 months thinking of this record."
Simon Neil

Unleash the beast! Simon Neil ends his confinement, The Roundhouse, London, 15 October, 2019.

The whites of their eyes: Biffy Clyro get up close and personal in North London.

been in the studio for over a year and are currently putting the finishing touches to their forthcoming eighth album. The short UK tour they've crafted around tonight's gig must feel a little like coming up for air. "It's a total headfuck," says Neil. "We've been in absolute hibernation. I feel like I've been stuck in my brain for the last 18 months thinking of this record." He thinks it'll be a good thing for the new album, a necessary reminder that music is a living, breathing thing you share with people. "You're so in the minutiae of it all, so remembering the celebratory aspect of it is liberating. It's the perfect thing to experience, just as you're finishing a record because it reminds you of the joy of what you're doing."

A wave of hysteria passes over the sold-out crowd as the band enter the stage, punters in the downstairs standing section immediately whipped up into a frenzy as they burst into the title track from this year's soundtrack album Balance, Not Symmetry, its sweeping chorus providing the night's first big singalong. It's a full-throttle beginning that doesn't let up, the epic Living Is A Problem Because Everything Dies and the barbed-wire stomp of On A Bang following. Almost every track has a moment that the crowd holler back to them but tonight isn't totally reliant on the music. Biffy Clyro have put on some of the most spectacular rock'n'roll gigs of the past decade and just because tonight is in a smaller venue doesn't stop them from putting on a big show. Most impressive in the intimate surroundings is the beginning of Glitter And Trauma, when each member holds up a portable strobe that flashes in time with the track's rave-y intro.

SETLIST

- Balance, Not Symmetry
- Living Is A Problem Because Everything Dies
- On A Bang
- Howl
- God & Satan
- Mountains
- Glitter And Trauma
- Bubbles
- Born On A Horse
- Sunrise
- Re-Arrange
- Black Chandelier
- Fever Dream
- Different People
- Biblical
- There's No Such Thing As A Jaggy Snake
- Adored
- That Golden Rule
- Many Of Horror
- Wolves Of Winter
- Machines
- Stingin' Belle

An airing of 2004's There's No Such Thing As A Jaggy Snake, when they were all twisty-turning post-rock experimentalism, is a reminder of how far they've come, especially when it's followed by huge anthems That Golden Rule and Many Of Horror. Given that they've only done a handful of shows over the past few years, it's stunning how locked-in they sound. You'd think they've been on the road for an extended stretch as the crunching blues-rock of Stingin' Belle concludes an exhilarating performance.

Afterwards, they head back to their hotel, sipping on more tequila and working their way through a batch of weed. Neil says that playing live comes naturally to them, a muscle memory that's always there. "It's part of our DNA," he says. "We're so in sync with each other that we kind of move as one." It may have been a smaller gig than usual but tonight mattered to Neil. They all matter to him. "I want it to be better than every single gig we've ever played in London, which is probably 300 shows by this point. Because it's the Q Awards as well, it's such a special event for us, it felt like we were starting the Q Awards for the next day."

After the tour, they will head back to LA and finish the new album. For now, though, they can toast a night well done. When they step onstage, they're always in sync. That's what Biffy Clyro do. *NIALL DOHERTY*

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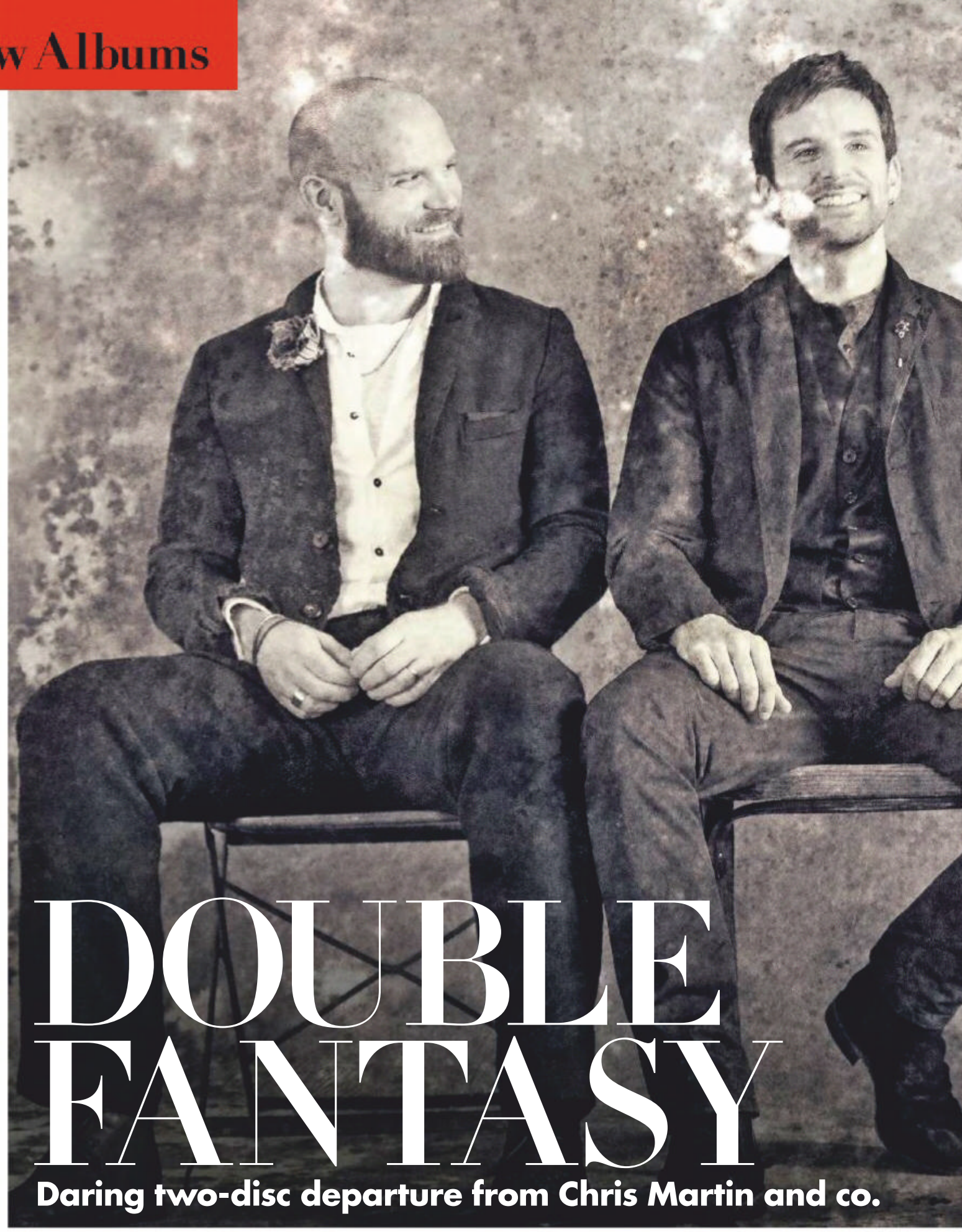


DOUBLE FANTASY

Daring two-disc departure from Chris Martin and co.

COLDPLAY

EVERYDAY LIFE

PARLOPHONE, OUT 22 NOVEMBER

In Coldplay's early days, Chris Martin aired his belief that their latest record would be their last so often that the declaration began to lose its impact. It came to feel like a sort of coping mechanism for the Coldplay frontman, a way for him to let go as he released new music into the wild. By the time they put out their seventh album, 2015's Technicolor, jubilant A Head Full Of Dreams, he had a variation on the theme. "The colour spectrum has seven colours," he said at the time, "so I think of this one being the seventh, the end of a whole journey. It's about finishing our first spectrum."

From that angle, this double album is the first instalment of Coldplay's second phase, but they haven't thrown the baby out with the bath water. They haven't even let all the bath water out; there are still huge choruses next to stripped-down ditties, euphoric singalongs that give way to dramatic instrumentals, big issues (police brutality, political corruption, the refugee crisis) boiled down into intimate ballads. The free-wheeling, collaborative spirit of A Head Full Of Dreams continues too, with only eight of its 16 tracks written solely by the quartet (on first single Orphans, there's a curious co-writing credit for Martin's teenage son Moses).

It's an album that switches one exotic location for another as frequently as a Bond film; from the US for the lithe Peter Gabriel-style pop of Trouble In Town and jaunty R&B of Cry Cry Cry, to Africa for the sweet acoustic-pop of Èkó and confined grooves of Arabesque, to Iran for the instrumental paean to the famous poem, Bani Adam, on the track of the same name. These steps into new sonic vistas are held together by both Martin's bewitching way with a melody, hooks you don't hear as razor-sharp until you realise they've been in

Eighth wonder: Coldplay (from left, Will Champion, Guy Berryman, Chris Martin and Jonny Buckland) think big.

your head for days, and a lightness of touch to the musicality. Nothing here sounds laboured over.

Everyday Life is sprawling but only in the way you imagine they wanted it to be. It's a rethink that sounds born out of the question: "What can we do next that's not the same as what we've just done?" It's an untucked record, a just-woke-up record, a record that puts perfectly-produced pop songs such as Orphans next to WOTW/POTP, a lovely track that could've been on the radio for months if they hadn't used the acoustic take that sounds like it was recorded on Chris Martin's patio on his iPhone's voice memos.

More familiar anthemic pillars help hold up the structure next to the experimental forays, and Everyday Life, Champion Of The World and Orphans are three stadium-sized singalongs that would be career-changing superhits for anyone else. With Coldplay, it's just what they do.

Everyday Life's conceptual structure (it's split into Sunrise and Sunset) and creative reset make it a close relative to the band's 2008 LP Viva La Vida Or Death And All His Friends. The difference is that, going into Viva La Vida..., Coldplay were in danger of losing their way, while this came off the back of a record-breaking, globe-conquering tour. That confidence seeps through Coldplay's eighth album. It's a thrilling new start, a daring way to kick off their second chapter. The end of one spectrum, and the beginning of another. ★★★★

NIALL DOHERTY

Listen To: Orphans | Champion Of The World | Èkó | Arabesque

Two Of A Kind Other high-concept double albums.

The Smashing Pumpkins

Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness (1995)

Thematically similar to Everyday Life, the grunge stars' opus was made up of two discs: Dawn To Dusk and Twilight To Starlight. ★★★★

Kate Bush

Aerial (2005)

Bush didn't take her first LP in 12 years lightly. A double, the second disc was a single piece of music designed to evoke a 24-hour adventure. Aerial featured heavily in her 2014 comeback show. ★★★★

Biffy Clyro

Opposites (2013)

Mainstream success prompted the Scottish trio to think big on their sixth LP, with frontman Simon Neil writing one side of songs set in the past and the other looking to the future. ★★★★

ALTER BRIDGE
WALK THE SKY
NAPALM, OUT NOW

Floridian rock outfit continue their rise with grandstanding sixth LP.

Long before they became UK arena headliners, Alter Bridge were delivering metal-injected rock primed to fill even the most cavernous spaces. That trait certainly holds true on Walk The Sky. Even if a slightly bloated tracklist doesn't help their cause, the sound of Myles Kennedy's crystalline melodies and bluesy guitar work zig-zagging over Mark Tremonti's orgiastic riffs remains thrilling. Lyrically, Dying Light and Walking On The Sky are freighted with mucho fear and excess trembling, but what separates Alter Bridge from their peers is a certain fearlessness when it comes to being overtly sentimental. Indeed, that's precisely why the elegiac Godspeed captures this band in their prime. ★★★★

GEORGE GARNER

Listen To: Godspeed | Walking On The Sky | Dying Light

BISHOP BRIGGS
CHAMPION
ISLAND, OUT NOW

OTT pop anthems for the recently broken-hearted.

On her second album of scuffed emo-pop, London-born singer-songwriter Sarah Grace McLaughlin swings between post-break-up self-laceration and rousing herself for a fight. In fact, it often happens in the space of a single song. On the blown-out title track, weakness is alchemised into a rousing, stadium-ready chorus, while on My Shine she undermines the polished production with a savage vocal that ends with her screaming, "God forbid I'm independent." Occasionally, the grandstanding overwhelms, with a laboured metaphor ruining Jekyll & Hyde, while Lonely is swallowed by an epic swirl of choirs and brass. In the end, it's on the quieter moments – the lovely Wild, closer I Tried – that Champion finds its emotional sweet spot. ★★★

MICHAEL CRAGG

Listen To: Wild | I Tried

"A wonderful return": Bonnie "Prince" Billy rises again.

BONNIE "PRINCE" BILLY
I MADE A PLACE
DOMINO, OUT NOW

Will Oldham shines on first LP of original material in eight years.

There are some songwriters you miss sorely in their absence. And while Bonnie "Prince" Billy has lent the distinctive bitter rind of his voice to multiple projects – tributes to Merle Haggard and The Mekons for instance, it's been eight years since he released a collection of new material. It's a balm to hear Will Oldham's turn of phrase again – there will surely be few lyricists this year who can rival Building A Fire's, "Tomorrow is an octopus/You can look for me there", for example. Fewer yet who can slip from the glorious country-lollop of Squid Eye to the glowering alt-folk of I Have Made A Place. Across the range of these 13 short songs is the sound of a singular musician revelling in his gift. A wonderful return. ★★★★

LAURA BARTON

Listen To: Building A Fire | Squid Eye | New Memory Box

CLAMS CASINO
MOON TRIP RADIO
CLAMS CASINO, OUT NOW

Moody, low-key return from fêted US rap producer.

A major influence on the sound of modern rap thanks to his work with A$AP Rocky, New Jersey beatmaker Michael Volpe here makes a surprise return to the brooding experiments of his early instrumental mixtapes, following 2016's star-studded solo debut 32 Levels. Shorn of vocals there's a funereal frisson to his style – all shuffling beats, sinister synth patches and sepulchral reverb. Healing's mournful strings and the warped tones of Fire Blue epitomise a late-night mood far removed from formulaic "type beats", while In A Mirror finds him stepping into ghostly electronica that's closer to post-rave visionaries such as Burial than it is to hip-hop. ★★★

RUPERT HOWE

Listen To: Healing | Fire Blue | In A Mirror

JOSIENNE CLARKE
IN ALL WEATHER
ROUGH TRADE, OUT NOW

Award-winning folk singer goes solo in more ways than one.

Last year, the folk singer Josienne Clarke ended her decade-long creative partnership with Ben Walker and split up from her boyfriend. On her first solo collection, Clarke strives to make sense of all this upheaval. The chamber folk of her prior work hasn't been entirely abandoned, but there is a wider sonic palette. The pastoral My Love Gave Me An Apple is warmed by glowing synths, while the power-pop of If I Didn't Mind and Smiths-like Slender, Sad And Sentimental suggest a songwriter capable of spinning several plates at once. On Season And Time, Clarke asks if songwriting is even a useful way of solving personal problems – right or not, she's delivered an intimate record tailor-made for long wintry nights. ★★★★

FERGAL KINNEY

Listen To: My Love Gave Me An Apple | Season And Time

DAEDELUS
THE BITTEREINDERS
BRAINFEEDER, OUT NOW

Uneasy listening album about Victorian-era war.

For close to two decades, California's Alfred Darlington, aka Daedelus, has been out there exploring the farthest reaches of electronic sound. Even for him, though, his latest project has been quite an ambitious trip – a three-album concept titled End Of Empire. This final instalment concerns itself with the Second Boer War (1899-1902), although there's little really to indicate that within its analogue synth washes and woozy avant-jazz. Things take a turn for the – even – weirder with the feedbacking loops of Sangoma and synth-on-the-blink sounds of Anima. As we nosedive into the grinding noise of Staatsartillerie, the migraine-inducing war-like effect is complete. But, by the end, it's unlikely that anyone will want to hit play again. ★★

TOM DOYLE

Listen To: Trifling | Du Sud

DJ SHADOW
OUR PATHETIC AGE
MASS APPEAL, OUT NOW

Trip-hop veteran returns with conflicted double album.

Celebrated for his 1996 debut Endtroducing..., Josh Davis still hasn't surpassed its expansive vision and musical daring. This 90-minute, two-disc set certainly has the ambition, the first disc's collection of stylistically varied instrumentals spanning Intersectionality's modular synth experiments and Juggernaut's retro electro-stutter. The second, vocal-themed disc is more linear and drafts in an impressive range of old-school rap talents who clearly relish Davis's cut-up style – Nas on the busy Drone Warfare and the skittering Kings & Queens, featuring Run The Jewels. He remains a maestro at the mixing desk, even as the album's split-down-the-middle concept undermines his genre-splicing strengths. ★★★

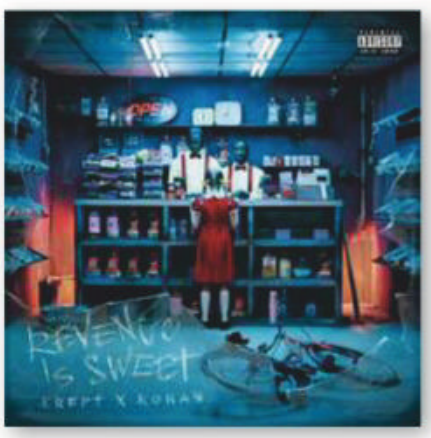
RUPERT HOWE

Listen To: Intersectionality | Juggernaut | Kings & Queens

The bear necessities: Krept (left) and Konan deal with a tough couple of years.

SAD BANGERS

UK's premier rap duo return with pithy bars and heavy hearts.



KREPT & KONAN

REVENGE IS SWEET

VIRGIN/EMI, OUT NOW

Krept & Konan – aka South London rappers Casyo Johnson and Karl Wilson – have had a monumentally unpleasant couple of years. In 2018, Nash Chagonda – a partner in their Croydon dessert restaurant Crepes & Cones – took his own life; in February, Johnson's cousin Blaine, who made music under the moniker Cadet, was killed in a car crash; and in October, Johnson was stabbed backstage at a 1Xtra concert in Birmingham. The latter is too recent to have shaped the contents of Revenge Is Sweet, but the losses in their lives echo through the pair's second LP: the antsy Keep Talking features an appearance from Cadet, while Broski sees the pair struggle to deal with Chagonda's passing over a minimalist piano backdrop.

Yet the record isn't just about grappling with grief – there's also plenty of the kind of glibly swaggering good-time rap that has made the duo famous. Featuring guest verses from Stormzy, Wizkid, Headie One and MoStack, Revenge Is Sweet swerves between old-school grime, dancehall, trap and R&B. Sometimes, the groovier, mellower tracks dull the clarity of the MCs' densely witty lyrics. But when the pair's smart humour and indignant ire is given room to shine, as on the chilly grime of I Spy, they live up to their reputation as two of the UK's foremost rap maestros. ★★★★

RACHEL AROESTI

Listen To: I Spy | G Love | Broski

Q&A

KREPT & KONAN talk to RACHEL AROESTI about mixtapes, sweet revenge and absent friends.

It's been four years since your debut album The Long Way Home, but you've released a few mixtapes in the meantime. How do you differentiate between the two formats?

Krept: "With a mixtape you don't really think about intricate details, or making it concepted. There are no interludes, no hard copies, you don't go crazy with the promo. Whereas with an album, there's a theme – you talk more about your life."

Konan: "One's more like fast food and one's more like a sit-down restaurant meal."

There's a sample of a song by Konan's dad, the late reggae star Delroy Wilson, on the album. What made you decide to incorporate his music?

Konan: "The song's called Better Must Come and he says, 'Who God bless, no one curse.' It went along with the theme of revenge is sweet, us replying to the haters online. My dad was talking about it then, we're talking about it now."

Broski is a tribute to your business partner who took his own life last year – how difficult was it to write?

Krept: "It's us just thinking out loud. He passed away in May and that one was written at the end of the year so we could gather our thoughts. But if I had to write something in a week after he passed I could because music's like therapy."

There are also plenty of upbeat songs on the record. Did you have to think carefully about shifting between the two moods?

Krept: "Yeah, definitely."

Konan: "Our intros are always epic and choiry and that's a representation of our live performance and off the back of that you want to keep the pace. Then you switch it up halfway through, and then we thought to end it on a serious note. We make it flow, so it's not just one dramatic sound to the other."

"A mixtape is like fast food, an album's a sit-down meal." Konan

STAR POWER

Pharrell Williams, Chris Martin and Sky Ferreira help Beck soar on stellar 14th outing.

BECK

HYPERSPACE

CAPITOL RECORDS, OUT 22 NOVEMBER

Nothing if not unpredictable, over the past quarter of a century Beck Hansen has dabbled with everything from lo-fi anti-folk and heart-shattering acoustic balladry to slutty sex-funk, but his latest incarnation takes him closest to breakthrough album Odelay's game-changing mash of hip-hop and blues. It's not just Beck's own capricious nature we have to thank for that, but the Midas-like Pharrell Williams, who has left a highly conspicuous mark, co-writing and producing seven of Hyperspace's 11 escapism-infatuated tracks.

Saw Lightning is a wondrous case in point, a confrontational, Loser-like highlight that flings together Muddy Waters and George Clinton over aggressively strummed steel strings and chaotic drum machines, sounding akin to Link Wray's swampy 1970s brand of fire and brimstone. It might have taken 20 years for these two alt-pop princes to come together – it was first mooted as an idea back in 1999 during Beck's Midnite Vultures period – but there's a gentle effortlessness and familiarity to their collaboration.

When they dial down proceedings for Chemical's soulful space-rock swoon as well as the hazy title track, which features up and coming rapper Terrell Hines, it seems like the most natural thing in the world. Williams isn't the only big name guest – Adele producer Paul Epworth is behind the languid Star, Coldplay's Chris Martin offers breathy backing vocals to Stratosphere and strutting, synth-y bop Die Waiting features crooning whispers courtesy of pop provocateur Sky Ferreira. For such a heavenly record, an all-star cast makes perfect sense. ★★★★

LEONIE COOPER

Listen To: Saw Lightning | Die Waiting | Chemical

It's taken 20 years for Beck and Pharrell to come together but there's a gentle effortlessness to their collaboration.

Kerb your enthusiasm: Beck puts his best foot forward.

PETER HAPAK

DOON KANDA

LABYRINTH

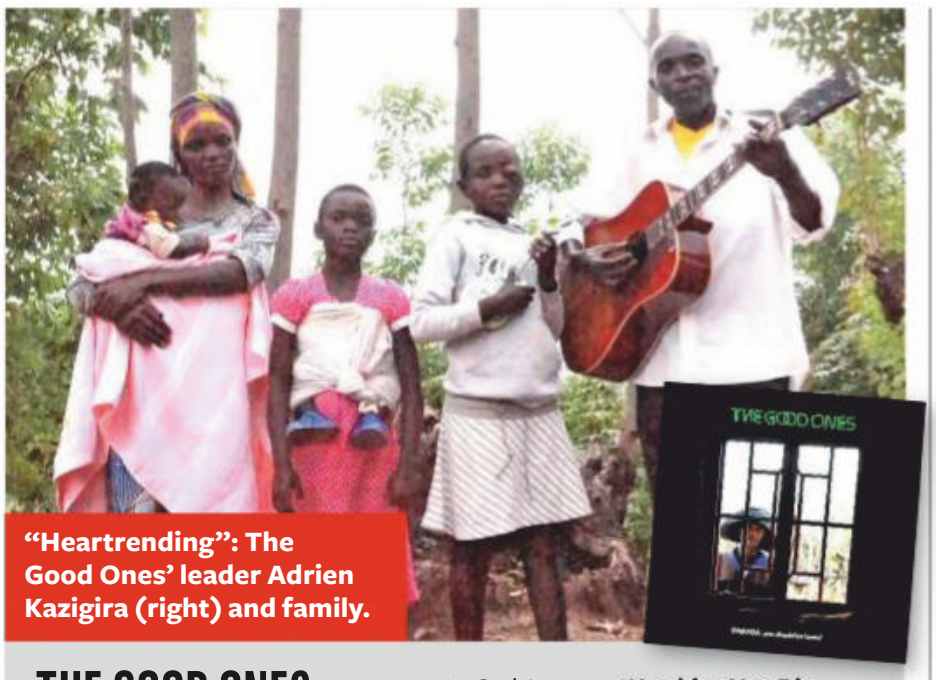
HYPERDUB, OUT 29 NOVEMBER

Björk's videographer wants to reinvent dance music.

A groundbreaking visual collaborator with Björk, FKA twigs and Arca, Jesse Kanda's own music shows the inspiration runs both ways, the London-based, Japanese-Canadian taking a similarly experimental approach to sound as he sculpts striking new forms from heavily treated electronica. Entering his maze of influences (think modern chamber music refracted through Arca's alien techno) can initially prove a challenge, Polycephaly glinting with angular, hyperreal piano chimes and Enigma evoking glitchy orchestral rave. But over 13 tracks clarity slowly emerges, with Nastasya's glistening, serpentine techno and Bunny's off-kilter dubstep offering the clearest glimpse of Kanda's ambition to reshape club music to his own design. ★★★

RUPERT HOWE

Listen To: Enigma | Nastasya



"Heartrending": The Good Ones' leader Adrien Kazigira (right) and family.

THE GOOD ONES

RWANDA, YOU SHOULD BE LOVED

ANTI-, OUT NOW

East African folk, with surprise appearance from Kevin Shields.

A collection of heartrending protest ballads by a trio of farmers from the genocide-scarred East African territory of Rwanda is not where you'd expect to find British rock's most fabled noisenik making a rare appearance. Shields, the My Bloody Valentine mastermind, lays a high, droning synth chord under A Long, Sad Journey Watching You Die, bringing a Kraut-y intensity to the song, which was written by TGO leader Adrien Kazigira about the ocular tumour draining the life out of his 13-year-old daughter. That muted contribution should bring welcome Western attention to The Good Ones' third LP. Their parched, skeletal songs, built around simple guitar figures, Appalachian-style harmonies and super-catchy tunes merit a wider audience. ★★★★

ANDREW PERRY

Listen To: A Long, Sad Journey Watching You Die | The Farmer

JACQUES GREENE

DAWN CHORUS

LUCKYME, OUT NOW

Producer's second LP sets the controls for the stratosphere.

Canadian producer Philippe Aubin-Dionne's second album as Jacques Greene is sky-high and soaring from the off: a muffled voice crackles in the distance on opener Serenity while piercing drones slice through the calm like searchlights in a night sky. Dawn Chorus trades the interiority of his 2017 debut for a galaxy-sized sense of connectedness. Collaborators, including Clams Casino and Machinedrum, sit gently in the mix, leaving Greene to build a universe from shivery hi-hats and blurred vocal samples. For Love's thick, rubbery synth celebrates house music as communion, but closer Stars leaves the club to move outwards and upwards, tracing a path through the Milky Way. Dawn Chorus is quietly, but righteously confident. ★★★★

KATIE HAWTHORNE

Listen To: Serenity | For Love

M. T. HADLEY

EMPTY

PIAS, OUT NOW

London singer's debut combines sweet grooves with sad stories.

In 2016, Martin Hadley released his first ever track, Janet. Over a squelchy synth line, the North Londoner described the death of his mother, recounting the timeline and recording her legacy in his mellow falsetto with a simplicity that was at once devastating and piercingly beautiful. It wasn't an easy act to follow – which may be why it took Hadley three years to put out any more material. Now, finally, he has returned with a debut album that lives up to his early promise. Empty pairs lyrical bleakness with soft, spacey, faintly arch pop that lands somewhere between Tame Impala, Phil Collins and Elvis Costello – invariably gorgeous but, thanks to Hadley's mordant humour, satisfyingly spiky too. ★★★★

RACHEL AROESTI

Listen To: First Floor | Janet | Read Receipt

MARILENA UMUHOZA DELLI

HALF MOON RUN

A BLEMISH IN THE GREAT LIGHT

GLASSNOTE, OUT NOW

Montreal quartet soar and frustrate on third album.

As formidable practitoners of lush, richly-orchestrated indie-rock, Half Moon Run occupy the sweet spot where the sensibilities of Fleet Foxes, My Morning Jacket and Coldplay would conceivably overlap. That trend continues on their third album, with Natural Disaster and Black Diamond delivering elegant acoustic, piano and string arrangements aplenty. So far, so dreamy. But it's their determination to flaunt their multi-instrumental credentials that derails some songs, with Razorblade's rogue synth eruption being one particularly cloying example. Much more effective is when HMR exercise restraint. Look no further than standout Undercurrents: a ghostly piano instrumental to lose yourself in completely. ★★★

GEORGE GARNER

Listen To: Undercurrents | Black Diamond | Natural Disaster

TAYLOR HAWKINS & THE COATTAIL RIDERS

GET THE MONEY

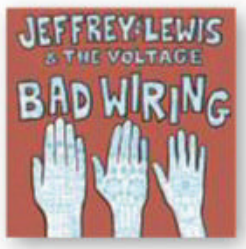
SHANABELLE/COLUMBIA, OUT NOW

Foo Fighters drummer steps out from behind kit.

The list of guests on Taylor Hawkins's fourth solo album reads like the most random episode of TOTP2 ever: LeAnn Rimes lines up next to Level 42's Mark King, ex-Sex Pistols guitarist Steve Jones and the current singer of Yes. What it lacks in coherence, Get The Money makes up for in ADHD-fuelled entertainment. Hawkins is having a blast here, trading woes about a stale marriage with his boss, Dave Grohl, on the '70s soft-rock blowout You're No Good At Life No More and letting Queen drummer Roger Taylor have a crack at The Yardbirds' Shapes Of Things. It won't give the Foo Fighters sleepless nights, but it's fun while it lasts. ★★★

DAVE EVERLEY

Listen To: Crossed The Line | You're No Good At Life No More



JEFFREY LEWIS & THE VOLTAGE

BAD WIRING

MOSHI MOSHI, OUT NOW

"Anti-folk" singer-songwriter keeps the sparks flying.

Nearly 20 years and many releases since his debut The Last Time I Did Acid I Went Insane, it's still astonishing what Jeffrey Lewis can cram into one song. On Bad Wiring, for example, the increasingly hysterical My Girlfriend Doesn't Worry crams Charles Manson, Mao Zedong and the pointlessness of human existence into a folk-punk meltdown. The hilarious garage-rock of LPs, meanwhile, analyses record collector psychology and '60s music history. As ever, the native New Yorker delivers each line with an urgency that promises revelation, especially on mordant art-versus-commerce satire Exactly What Nobody Wanted. Electrifying, again. ★★★★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Listen To: Exactly What Nobody Wanted | LPs

LIGHTNING BOLT

SONIC CITADEL

THRILL JOCKEY, OUT NOW

Two men – one massive tripped-out sound.

After 25 years the fast-and-furious noise-rock duo Lightning Bolt show little sign of slowing down. Brians Gibson and Chippendale begin album number seven with the aptly named Blow To The Head, a Technicolor metal display of free jazz-friendly intensity. It's hard to make out Lightning Bolt's lyrics at the best of times, but through its title and twirling psychedelics USA Is A Psycho manages to succinctly channel the mood of a nation, all rattling confusion and what sounds an awful lot like a cry for help. While proceedings might be more restrained than usual on the '80s hardcore-aping Hüsker Dön't and Sabbath clatter of Halloween 3, if you think Lightning Bolt have softened you're very much mistaken. ★★★

LEONIE COOPER

Listen To: Blow To The Head | Hüsker Dön't

JEFF LYNNE'S ELO

FROM OUT OF NOWHERE

COLUMBIA, OUT NOW

Brummie Beatles' surprisingly ace 14th album.

Anyone who's enjoyed Jeff Lynne's post-2014 reactivation of ELO in concert will know how closely he sticks to the multi-tracked symphonic signatures of the group's glory days. So it goes with the second album of his return. It's warmingly unreal how in thrall he remains to The Beatles, from melodic progressions down to the thwack of drums, but these heartache-powered ballads retain a simple elation at the power of rock'n'roll. While All My Love is just one song which croons sweetly melancholic nostalgia, Lynne goes for broke on the prosaic yet heartfelt gig memoire Time Of Our Life. A be-permed raging against the dying of the ELO spaceship's hyperdrive, it'd be churlish to refuse him. ★★★

IAN HARRISON

Listen To: All My Love | One More Time | Time Of Our Life

In a field of his own: Matt Maltese blows away the opposition.

MATT MALTESE

KRYSTAL

SEVENFOURSEVENSIX, OUT NOW

London clever clogs blossoms into gifted singer-songwriter.

On last year's debut, Bad Contestant, Matt Maltese presented a millennial's update of the louche, smart Alec singer-songwriter. While the 22-year-old's wit remains sharp, Krystal softens the focus, its predecessor's dandyish piano pop caramelising into a lush, multi-tracked gorgeousness befitting an ascendant Harry Nilsson. Crucially too, tracks such as the sumptuous Curl Up & Die and the wee-small-hours reflections of When You Wash Your Hair load their clever one-liners with hard-won emotional pathos. Smart, affecting and rich in melody, Krystal reveals Maltese to be very much the full ticket. ★★★★

CHRIS CATCHPOLE

Listen To: Tall Buildings | When You Wash Your Hair

ANNA MEREDITH

FIBS

MOSHI MOSHI, OUT NOW

Award-winning techno-classical composer returns at full power.

One of the most exciting talents to emerge from the recent intersection between orchestral and dance, Anna Meredith's 2016 LP Varmints delivered her to a new audience beyond the concert hall. She's since barely stopped writing and performing, with recent commissions including Anno, a reworking of Vivaldi's Four Seasons. Yet, if anything, she sounds on even more exuberant form here, fusing the drama of the classical repertoire with sweeping pop (Inhale Exhale) and turbo-charged acid house (Calion). In fact, Fibs's wild creative leaps know no boundaries, Killjoy sounding like scaled-up Stereolab while Bump cheekily nods to Star Wars. A thrilling testament to Meredith's seemingly limitless capacity for reinvention. ★★★★

RUPERT HOWE

Listen To: Inhale Exhale | Calion

VAN MORRISON

THREE CHORDS AND THE TRUTH

EXILE/CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL, OUT NOW

Fourteen new originals from a true original.

It's been decades since anyone thought that Van Morrison needed to prove himself to anybody, which makes the majestic verve of his 41st studio album all the more remarkable. From deep Celtic soul on March Winds In February to the New Orleans funk of the title track and In Search Of Grace's pop breeziness, Morrison languidly strolls though the light and dark of his past stylistic glories over 14 entirely new self-penned songs. Astonishingly, there's barely a song here that wouldn't fit hand in glove on any album from his '70s and early-'80s salad days, which just goes to show that 74 is no age at which to stop trying. ★★★★

ANDY FYFE

Listen To: March Winds In February | Dark Night Of The Soul | If We Wait For Mountains

MS BANKS

THE COLDEST WINTER EVER PT 2

MS BANKS, OUT NOW

Bouncy garage, body positivity and more from London MC.

From the rapidly ascending Little Simz to Stefflon Don, who rubbed shoulders with DJ Khaled and Future on her last mixtape, the time is now for British female rappers. If her buoyant debut LP is anything to go by, 25-year-old Ms Banks is ready to join them. Lunging from dancehall-flecked jams (Back It Up) to the body-positive Afrobeats of Snack alongside Nigeria's Kida Kudz, it reveals a steely, sultry star on the rise. As at home performing with pop heavyweights Little Mix as she is collaborating with UK garage producer du jour Conducta, Banks shows that sometimes being a jack of all trades is fine, so long as you can master them all, too. ★★★★

HANNAH J DAVIES

Listen To: Snack | Dem Man Phoney | Hood B*tch

NOCTURNAL SUNSHINE

FULL CIRCLE

I/AM/ME/BMG, OUT NOW

Successful second outing for dance producer's dubstep alter-ego.

Although she's still best known for the light, bouncy house of What They Say, which travelled the world's charts via its sampling on Nicki Minaj's Truffle Butter, Maya Jane Coles's albums have tended to be greyly moody affairs. Full Circle, the second full-length of her dubstep moniker, makes little effort to flip that script, despite a succession of featured vocalists. On the contrary, excepting the crunk-flavoured Pull Up, which features Gangsta Boo of Three-6 Mafia, her guests thicken rather than refresh the colour palette. While some tracks stumble, most hit home. Boo's second appearance, Ridin' Solo, creeps ominously while Something About The Drama straddles the line between fear and exhilaration perfectly. ★★★

STEVE YATES

Listen To: Ridin' Solo | Dash | Something About The Drama

PLASTIC FANTASTIC

Eerily synthetic but emotionally sincere dance-pop from PC Music stalwart.

Artificial intelligence: Hannah Diamond shines brightly on her debut album.

HANNAH DIAMOND

REFLECTIONS

PC MUSIC, OUT 22 NOVEMBER

As monikers go, Hannah Diamond's feels especially apt: Norwich native Hannah Armond constructs her sickly-sweet pop from a series of gleaming surfaces – shrill synths, girlish, artificially glitchy vocals that invariably build to a glass-shattering falsetto. Visually, Diamond is even more unnervingly shiny. Showcased compulsively on Instagram, her hyperreal aesthetic is achieved with eye-watering levels of Photoshop polish.

As part of the PC Music collective, which includes A.G. Cook and SOPHIE, the 28-year-old has spent the past half-decade helping to establish the sound of postmodern pop. In that time, Diamond has released a slew of irresistibly catchy and uncannily slick singles that prove she can recreate the intoxicating pull of a brilliant pop song and simultaneously highlight its synthetic nature. Reflections, her debut album, showcases her ability to produce off-kilter yet straightforwardly gratifying tracks – Fade Away, the happy hardcore cover of country-pop hit Concrete Angel, The Ending's achingly sweet take on dancehall – while also cultivating a sense of personal intimacy. Diamond's lyrics are artfully banal: peppered with pop cliché, she sings about low-stakes heartbreak and social media insecurity with a vulnerability that's truly moving.

Combining her finely-wrought, post-ironic take on chart music sheen with a convincingly heart-on-sleeve disclosure, Reflections proves Diamond is so much more than a two-dimensional pop project. ★★★★

RACHEL AROESTI

Listen To: Reflections | Concrete Angel | Fade Away

scala
RADIO
WITH MARK KERMODE
1PM-3PM SATURDAYS
THE UK'S NEW CLASSICAL MUSIC STATION
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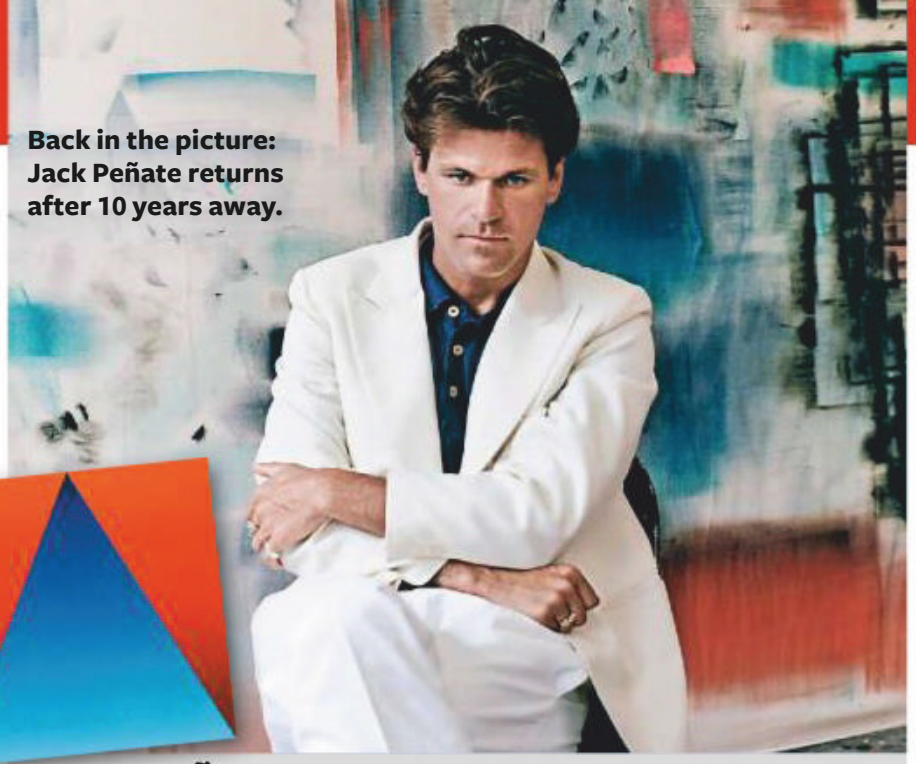
SCALA APP
SKY
SMART SPEAKER
go to scalaradio.co.uk/retune



Back in the picture: Jack Peñate returns after 10 years away.

JACK PEÑATE
AFTER YOU
XL, OUT 29 NOVEMBER

After 10 years, indie-popper returns with some serious soul.

Of all the early-noughties indie scamps who emerged out of the short-lived Thamesbeat scene (Jamie T, Mystery Jets, Larrikin Love) the perky Jack Peñate was never top of the list for going the full Chinese Democracy. Yet here we are with his third album a full decade after the last. Gone are the chirpy Everyman anthems and in their place contemplative, gospel-drenched soul. The sultry Prayer is Nick Drake by way of actual Drake, twinning fingerpicked folk with driving R&B as Peñate sings of how he "got lost trying to be what I'm not." He doubles down on the grandeur in Gemini, which swirls around poetry by Peñate's grandfather, Gormenghast author Mervyn Peake, dramatically spoken by his uncle, Fabian. There are further clues as to where the past 10 years have gone in the yearning Cipralex, named after a popular antidepressant. It's a surprise to have him back, but on the strength of After You, a more than welcome one. ★★★★

LEONIE COOPER

Listen To: Prayer | Murder | Swept To The Sky

JIM NOIR
A.M. JAZZ
DOOK, OUT 29 NOVEMBER

Hypnotic grooves on Manchester musician's first in five years.

In direct contrast to his last release, the '60s-rocking and often Beatles-y Finnish Line, from 2014, Jim Noir – the far less starrily-named Alan Roberts in real life – has returned to the murky experimental pop methods of his 2005 Tower Of Love debut. The deceptively titled A.M. Jazz is way slicker, though, recorded over the past five years in Noir's studio in a suburb of Manchester. Fans of the downtempo side of Super Furry Animals will find a lot to enjoy in the overall vibe, while Wonders Amber sounds like a children's TV theme from the early '70s and Upside Down is clearly a tribute to The Three EPs-era Beta Band. A lovely, soothing aural balm. ★★★★

TOM DOYLE

Listen To: Upside Down | Hexagons | Wonders Amber

SEAN O'HAGAN
RADUM CALLS, RADUM CALLS
DRAG CITY, OUT NOW

High Llamas head honcho gallops off into pastures solo.

This may only be High Llamas' Sean O'Hagan's second solo LP since 1990, but there is little to differentiate it from his usual band's outings. Present and correct are the usual sonic signifiers: an all-consuming love for Brian Wilson's sandpit years, a subtle hint of bossa nova and a sort of wide-eyed guilelessness. But where such previous high watermarks as Gideon Gaye were elevated by a widescreen lushness, Radum Calls... just feels slightly enervated. On A Lonely Day (Ding Dong) is by far the best thing on the album, a Moondog-like shuffle alternating with a swaying melody straight out of Smiley Smile. But even here, as throughout, there's a grating tweeness that pushes the saccharine levels far into the red. ★★

MARTIN BOON

Listen To: On A Lonely Day (Ding Dong)

PBDY
CAREWORN
BRAINFEEDER, OUT NOW

Gorgeous glumness from offbeat auteur.

The first of a promised trilogy exploring "love, loss and death", Careworn sounds like it started at the end, worked back to the middle, then called it a day. So far from bright and breezy is this debut from the LA electronic producer, it takes the arrival of deadpan Nico sing-alike Anika to put a spring in its step with the almost-uplifting This State Of Mine. But what it lacks in sunshine, it makes up for with smouldering sentiment. From the brilliantly unsettling instrumental So Help Me (DOG) to Tears Or Rain, a typically epic turn from Future Islands' Samuel Herring over a clawing horrorscape, this startling album picks and pulls at any prospect of emotional ease. All chiller, no filler. ★★★★

STEVE YATES

Listen To: Tears Or Rain | At All Costs | So Help Me (DOG)

LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY
HEAVY RAIN
ON-U SOUND, OUT 6 DECEMBER

Radical dub refit of the Rainford album. With added Brian Eno.

Lee Perry has called On-U Sound's Adrian Sherwood his "shepherd", not least because the UK producer has steered the reggae maverick through his best solo work since Scratch's fabled Black Ark studio was torched in 1983. This dub companion piece to Rainford, the pair's superb collaboration from this year, even manages to go one notch higher. Brian Eno lends squiggly synth to the voodoo chug of Here Come The Warm Dreads, while ex-Skatalite/Wailer Vin Gordon's trombone injects a lush, jazzy levity to Crickets In Moonlight's wonky groove. But it's Sherwood's trippy, nuanced treatment which makes Heavy Rain special, working his sound-desk like an artist swirls colours on a palette. A masterclass in mixology. ★★★★

SIMON McEWEN

Listen To: Here Come The Warm Dreads | Mindworker | Enlightened

SAULT
7
FOREVER LIVING ORIGINALS, OUT NOW

Mysterious outfit's second set of shadowy funk.

It takes real commitment in 2019 to remain anonymous. Sault have zero online presence but have already dropped two albums in the space of five months. Seven continues the sparse grooves of debut Five (numeracy might be an issue): deep ESG-styled basslines and soulful vocals put through a light gauze of distorted fuzz. The palette remains the same, but new moods emerge, as when the Sesame Street-meets-De La Soul pop of Feel So Good drifts into Living In America's haunting state of a broken nation address. A delve into the world of subreddits suggests Sault is the work of Michael Kiwanuka collaborator Inflo and Chicago rapper Kid Sister. If they continue to put out records of this calibre they'll have a job keeping it a secret. ★★★★

CHRIS CATCHPOLE

Listen To: Feel So Good | Tip Toe

SEA CHANGE
INSIDE
SELF-RELEASED, OUT NOW

Second album from Norwegian electronic artist goes deep.

Ellen Sunde isn't the first person to have her perceptions tilted on their axis by time spent in Berlin and Los Angeles, yet there's a real sense of disorientation to Inside, the follow-up to 2015's debut Breakage. On Stepping Out and The Bed, Sunde fuses fairy-tale transformations with dense electronic atmospheres, skins shed and bodies altered in the style of Planningtorock or Jenny Hval. Woozy little hooks offer the only signposts through the thicket of distorted beats as Scratch That Itch and Inside chase the feeling of immersion in a club, but if Inside feels like a record keen to lose itself in sound and smoke, it still makes its presence felt. ★★★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Listen To: Scratch That Itch | Stepping Out | The Bed

SNOW PATROL
REWORKED
POLYDOR, OUT NOW

Gary Lightbody's band tinker with their back catalogue.

It has been a year of renewed success for Snow Patrol. The tour to support their 2018 album Wildness reassured Gary Lightbody and his group that they can still sell out arenas and their song Chasing Cars was unveiled as the 21st century's biggest radio track, illustrating how they got there. That sense of rejuvenation fuels this Reworked LP, the band revisiting some of their biggest hits to twist them into new shapes. It works best when they put the brakes on, turning Take Back The City into a hypnotic slow-burner and Chocolate into a cosy folk ballad. The brooding, epic Made Of Something Different Now shows where they could go next, a reminder that there's more to the band than over-played radio hits. ★★★

NIALL DOHERTY

Listen To: Chocolate | Made Of Something Different Now

SWANS
LEAVING MEANING
MUTE, OUT NOW

Slightly lighter return from the most serious man in rock.

Rumours of Swans' demise in 2017 were clearly exaggerated, as Michael Gira has quickly returned with the third incarnation of his experimental – and often abrasive – band. With collaborators this time including The Necks and Anna von Hausswolff, there's a lightness of touch to some of the material on Leaving Meaning compared to the brooding intensity of Gira's most recent albums: the hymnal Annaline is actually quite pretty, and the title track, while inevitably built around repetition, sounds atypically mellow, almost relaxing. Anyone wanting more of the multilayered sense of foreboding afforded by 2016's The Glowing Man, meanwhile, will be delighted by the pulverising Sunfucker and The Hanging Man. ★★★★

PHIL MONGREDIEN

Listen To: Sunfucker | Annaline

TINDERSTICKS
NO TREASURE BUT HOPE
CITY SLANG, OUT NOW

Springing eternal: 12th LP shows enduring band's precious mettle.

It's been 26 years since Tindersticks released their remarkable first album, and while there have been fluctuations in productivity and membership over time, their ability to dissect human nature against a soundtrack of intricate musical drama has rarely dipped. Aside from See My Girls – a modern vampiric travelogue that suggests Nick Cave fronting Roxy Music – No Treasure But Hope is admittedly light on jolts and shocks. Yet with songs as beautifully judged as The Amputees – agonising absence articulated by Stuart Staples's spilt-ink voice – or the slow-building shadows of Tough Love, Tindersticks once again turn the spaces and losses into songs of substance. ★★★★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Listen To: See My Girls | The Amputees | Tough Love

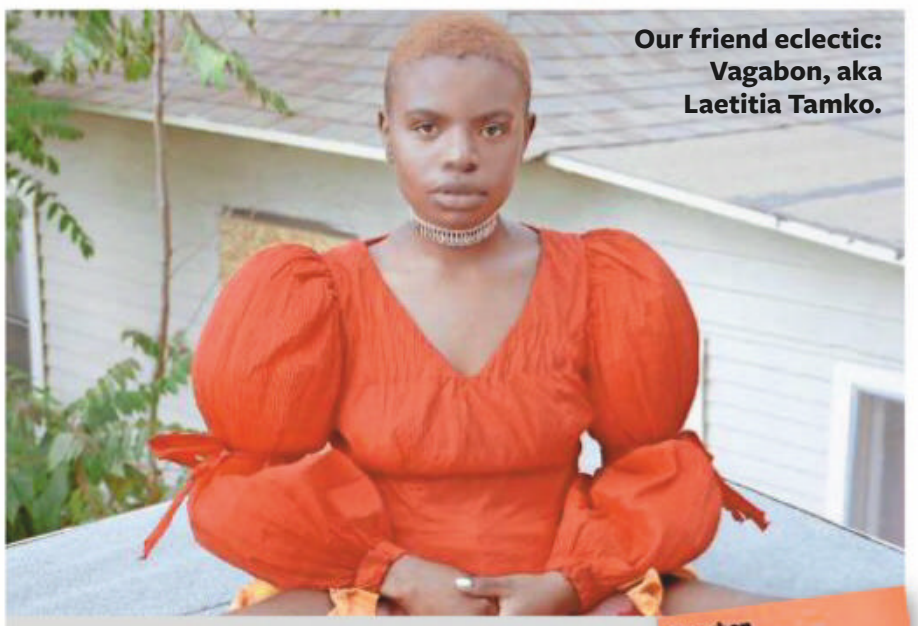
VETIVER
UP ON HIGH
LOOSE RECORDS, OUT NOW

Late summer serenity courtesy of US indie-folk stalwarts.

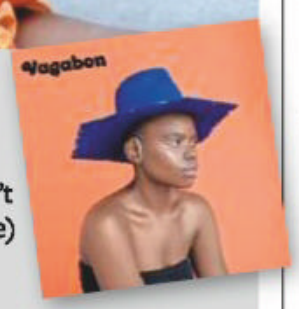
Neither as cosmic as sometime collaborator Devendra Banhart nor as boundary-bending as Bon Iver's Justin Vernon, Vetiver linchpin Andy Cabic ploughs a resolutely earthy furrow. The San Francisco folk collective's seventh album is a model of gentle American pastoralism, hovering somewhere between the mountaintops and the wheatfields. There's a stillness at the heart of the chiming, semi-acoustic The Living End, and you can see the heat haze rising from the Paul Simon-nudging A Door Shuts Quick. The folk-funk of Hold Tight provides a minor deviation, but Cabic found his groove a long time ago and is sticking to it. The result is undeniably lovely, if never truly transcendent. ★★★

DAVE EVERLEY

Listen To: The Living End | Swaying | A Door Shuts Quick



Our friend eclectic: Vagabon, aka Laetitia Tamko.



VAGABON
VAGABON
NONESUCH, OUT NOW

New York-via-Cameroon singer broadens her musical horizons.

Laetitia Tamko's 2017 debut Infinite Worlds dealt mainly in gently ramshackle indie-rock. On its follow-up, the Cameroon-born musician (she relocated to the US as a teenager) trades the guitar clatter for a blissed-out, synth-centric sound. The majority of the record is spent grappling with the disintegration of a relationship (though there are allusions to the fight for equality on Every Woman and Please Don't Leave The Table) over a subtly idiosyncratic backdrop that pulls from trip-hop, ambient rock, neo-soul, gospel and alt-folk. The sheer musical scope means Vagabon resembles a shifting mood piece, tied together not by generic tropes but its creator's singular sensibility. ★★★★

RACHEL AROESTI

Listen To: Full Moon In Gemini | Flood | Water Me Down

WARMDUSCHER
TAINTED LUNCH
THE LEAF LABEL, OUT NOW

Sweet doo-wop and mucky funk from the bowels of South London.

The Fat White Family-adjacent Warmduscher might want you to believe they're as grubby as Elvis's soiled '68 comeback special leather suit, but their squelchy sex-funk isn't all that strange. More familiar than freaky, the glam pulse of Midnight Dipper comes over like desert-pervs Eagles Of Death Metal on an away day in Peckham, Disco Peanuts reimagines Lipps Inc's Funky Town as a ketamine dungeon and Fill It, Don't Spill It is akin to a minor flare-up in The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion factory. Tiny Letters though is bold and soulful, as is the appearance of Kool Keith, who uses Burner's old-school bounce to wax about incontinent all-nighters and Wetherspoons, and it's hard not to be won over by an LP which opens with Iggy Pop's inimitable drawl. ★★★

LEONIE COOPER

Listen To: Burner | Tiny Letters

THE WHO
WHO
POLYDOR, OUT 6 DECEMBER

British icons' first album in 13 years.

"I don't care," barks Roger Daltrey, in his very first words on The Who's 12th album, "I know you're gonna hate this song – that said, we never really got along." That couplet, penned by Pete Townshend, encapsulates the poles-apart duo's partnership – Townshend writes prolifically; Daltrey pooh-poohs his efforts until his urgency is unstoppable. So it was with Who, where furious polemic butts against angry meditations on ageing. Swerving the rock-opera format essayed on 2006's Endless Wire, the songs are unconnected, with the best – Rockin' In Rage – apeing their 1971 classic, Won't Get Fooled Again. Others, like the sappy I'll Be Back, however, don't make the grade. A vigorous, if patchy comeback. ★★★

ANDREW PERRY

Listen To: All This Music Must Fade | Rockin' In Rage

SO LONG...

Adam Cohen completes his father's last "sketches" to produce a fine finale.

LEONARD COHEN
THANKS FOR THE DANCE
COLUMBIA, OUT 22 NOVEMBER.

Released 19 days before Leonard Cohen's death in 2016, You Want It Darker was an unimprovable final statement which sounded like the slow closing of a heavy door. Yet when you hear that voice, in all its bruised and blackened majesty, growling, "I was always working steady but I never called it art/ I got my shit together meeting Christ and reading Marx" on Happens To The Heart, you're grateful for Adam Cohen's commitment to colouring in his father's final "sketches". Cohen's body may have been failing but his mind was still worrying away at the mysteries of the human heart. He sings, in The Goal, of "settling at last accounts of the soul."

Four of these lyrics appeared in Cohen's 2018 poetry collection The Flame but only Listen To The Hummingbird remains more poem than song. Like a curator of fragile artefacts, Adam frames these vocals with faultless sensitivity, finding the right setting for each of Cohen's most enduring obsessions: the waltz of love and death in Moving On and the title track; war and cruelty in the bleak, damning Puppets; and ruthless self-examination in the swelling drama of The Hills. The guest musicians, ranging from Beck and Feist to Cohen's long-time backing singer Jennifer Warnes and his Spanish laúd player Javier Mas, don't add a single unnecessary note. Posthumous albums tend to sound cobbled together, compromised, missing that vital spark, but this loving father-son dialogue has produced a worthy epilogue to one of music's greatest songbooks. ★★★★

DORIAN LYNSKEY

Listen To: Happens To The Heart | Puppets | Thanks For The Dance | The Hills

Dead poet's society: Leonard Cohen does the posthumous thing in style.

MUST BUYS The essential albums of the last few months

Michael Kiwanuka
KIWANUKA
POLYDOR

Michael Kiwanuka's magnificent third album takes its cues from the London singer-songwriter's spiritual forebears, Curtis Mayfield and Bill Withers. And much like those artists, Kiwanuka has created a record full of compassion, generosity and resolute decency. A modern classic.

Girl Ray
Girl
MOSHI MOSHI

Folllowing the jangly, ramshackle love songs of their debut, the North London trio's second LP takes things in a whole new direction, musically at least. So, while Poppy Hankin's uniquely English lyrical perspective remains intact, the record finds the band revelling in their love of contemporary pop.

Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds
Ghosteen
GHOSTEEN/BAD SEED

On the Australian icons' 17th album, the loss of Nick Cave's 15-year-old son provides the looming, unignorable backdrop. Yet Cave has extracted sublime beauty from disaster, an achievement that renders this gorgeous, grief-stricken record all the more devastating.

Angel Olsen
All Mirrors
JAGJAGUWAR

Although the St Louis singer-songwriter began her career in the indie-folk tradition, over the years her output has become more artful and affected. Her fourth album, inspired by a recent break-up, sees that musical evolution culminate in a record that's startling and breathtakingly beautiful.

WIZARDS OF OZ

All-encompassing second anthology catches Brisbane band's imperial phase.

"Crisply literate and complex": The Go-Betweens (from left, Amanda Brown, Grant McLennan, Robert Forster, Lindy Morrison and Robert Vickers) in 1987.

THE GO-BETWEENS

G STANDS FOR GO-BETWEENS: VOLUME 2 – 1985-1989

DOMINO, OUT 6 DECEMBER

By March 1985, The Go-Betweens felt themselves losing altitude. Returning to the damp austerity of their North London base after touring Australia, their brighter, warmer homeland, singers and songwriters Grant McLennan and Robert Forster, drummer Lindy Morrison and bassist Robert Vickers knew they were preparing to make their fourth album without a deal, having worked through three labels with their first three records. As Forster writes in this compilation's detached third-person sleevenotes, "this was their final shot in Europe."

Yet as G Stands For Go-Betweens: Volume 2 – 1985-1989 shows, if the edge was looming commercially, creatively this was a band on the form of their lives. Included are the final three albums of their first phase; a wish-you-were-there live recording at London's Town & Country Club in May 1987; and a galaxy of illuminating rarities. It's often argued that 1986's Liberty Belle And The Black Diamond Express, 1987's Tallulah and 1988's 16 Lovers Lane should have propelled The Go-Betweens

These albums should have propelled the band to R.E.M. levels of glory, but they would never thrive in the spotlight.

to R.E.M. levels of glory, but their intricate play of light and shadow was never going to thrive in the spotlight. That's them in the corner – reading paperbacks, smoking, waiting until you come over and ask what they're doing.

"Wave after wave/Our tension and our tenderness," Forster sings on Love Is A Sign, part of 16 Lovers Lane's impressionistic fireworks. That line catches their scope: brittle, dry, nervy one minute; positively melted with yearning the next. Liberty Belle And The Black Diamond Express is often considered their defining statement, and with good reason – it contains (barely) Spring Rain's adolescent tumult, Forster catching the baton of McLennan's nostalgia on 1983 near-hit Cattle And Cane; The Wrong Road's embittered Dickensian drama; and Twin Layers Of Lightning's guttering, glamorous aggro. It's as crisply literate and complex as anything they achieved, but it's testament to their sustained strength that everything around it isn't completely dwarfed.

Tallulah (now featuring multi-instrumentalist Amanda Brown) is admittedly slightly overshadowed, yet its idiosyncrasies shine out, the astonishing emotional and melodic intelligence of Bye Bye Pride cut with the witchy fables of The Clarke Sisters ("They had problems with their father's law/They sleep in the back of a feminist book store") and The House Jack Kerouac Built.

It's 16 Lovers Lane, though, that feels most intoxicating, ending this incarnation on a miraculous high note, a culmination rather than dissipation. Love is the explicit text here, not young infatuation but ambivalent adult entanglement, compromised and cracked at every turn. "I know a thing about lovers/Lovers want the moon," sings McLennan on Love Goes On; Was There Anything I Could Do? rhymes "guru" and "voodoo" and eavesdrops on the neighbours; The Devil's Eye sees relationships as talismanic protection against an evil world. It's Forster who swoons hardest here, though, Dive For Your Memory a pure expression of faith in another human – or maybe a band: "We took that chance."

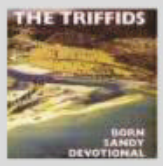
In 1990, after recording demos for a seventh album (28 are included in all their fascinating what-if promise, some heralds of later solo recordings) The Go-Betweens split up. McLennan and Forster re-formed in 2000, releasing three more excellent albums before McLennan's death in 2006. Yet this collection catches the band at the peak of their powers, the space between the tension and the tenderness still full of revelation. They knew a thing about lovers, yes, but so much more besides. ★★★★★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Listen To: Spring Rain | Bye Bye Pride | The Wrong Road | The Clarke Sisters

YOU BEAUTIES!

Three more '80s Australians in London exile.

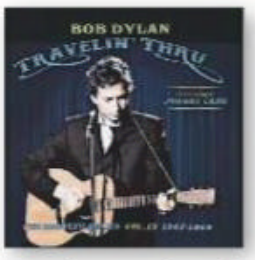


The Triffids
Born Sandy Devotional
MUSHROOM, 1986
This Perth band gave themselves three months to make it in London. Their classic second LP gave them a good reason to stay. ★★★★

The Apartments
The Evening Visits... And Stays For Years
ROUGH TRADE, 1985
This Brisbane band's London-recorded debut was big in France. Singer Peter Milton Walsh briefly played with The Go-Betweens. ★★★★

Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds
From Her To Eternity
MUTE, 1984
The Bad Seeds' tortured debut was largely recorded in Nick Cave's London flat although given the evil mood, possibly mastered in hell. ★★★★

ALSO OUT...



BOB DYLAN FEAT. JOHNNY CASH
TRAVELIN' THRU 1967-1969: THE BOOTLEG SERIES VOL. 15
COLUMBIA/LEGACY, OUT NOW

Post-motorbike crash set of rarities and curios.

The latest instalment of Dylan's never-ending series of outtakes, unreleased songs and curios focuses on his public emergence from the aftermath of his legendary motorcycle accident. This three-disc set goes from 1967's John Wesley Harding to 1969's Nashville Skyline, and is built around 28 songs recorded with Cash in country music's capital. The result is music any Dylan admirer should get deeply immersed in. ★★★★ *JOHN HARRIS*

HAPPY MONDAYS
THE EARLY EP'S
LONDON RECORDS, OUT NOW

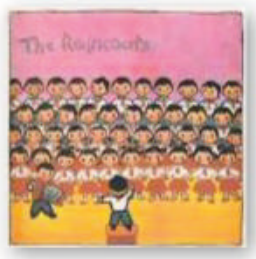
Primeval Ryder gang's early waxings.

The fact that Happy Mondays' early EPs have been unavailable since the '80s might suggest they aren't much cop. Nothing could be further from the truth. Here was the band as they mutated from quirky indie-rockers (see 1985's Forty Five) to a sublime, groovy freakishness. The Egg and Wah Wah (Think Tank) turn time inside-out with non-sync rhythms, Mark Day's fabulous, scabby funk guitar and Shaun Ryder's gleeful psycho-oratory. The effect remains brain-bogglingly unique. ★★★★ *IAN HARRISON*

PRINCE
1999
NPG/WARNER RECORDS, OUT 29 NOVEMBER

Multi-disc edition offers more purple pop classics.

Mixing slamming grooves with irresistible hooks, 1999 marked the start of Prince's early-'80s imperial phase. It was also recorded during a creative burst that left dozens of demos gathering dust. This six-disc "Super Deluxe" edition rescues the treasure, including alternate mixes, a complete live concert and nearly two discs' worth of unheard brilliance, not least Vagina's daring, non-binary funk and pop gem Yah, You Know. Finally, Paisley Park's crown jewels are on public display. ★★★★★ *RUPERT HOWE*



THE RAINCOATS
THE RAINCOATS
WETHREE, OUT NOW

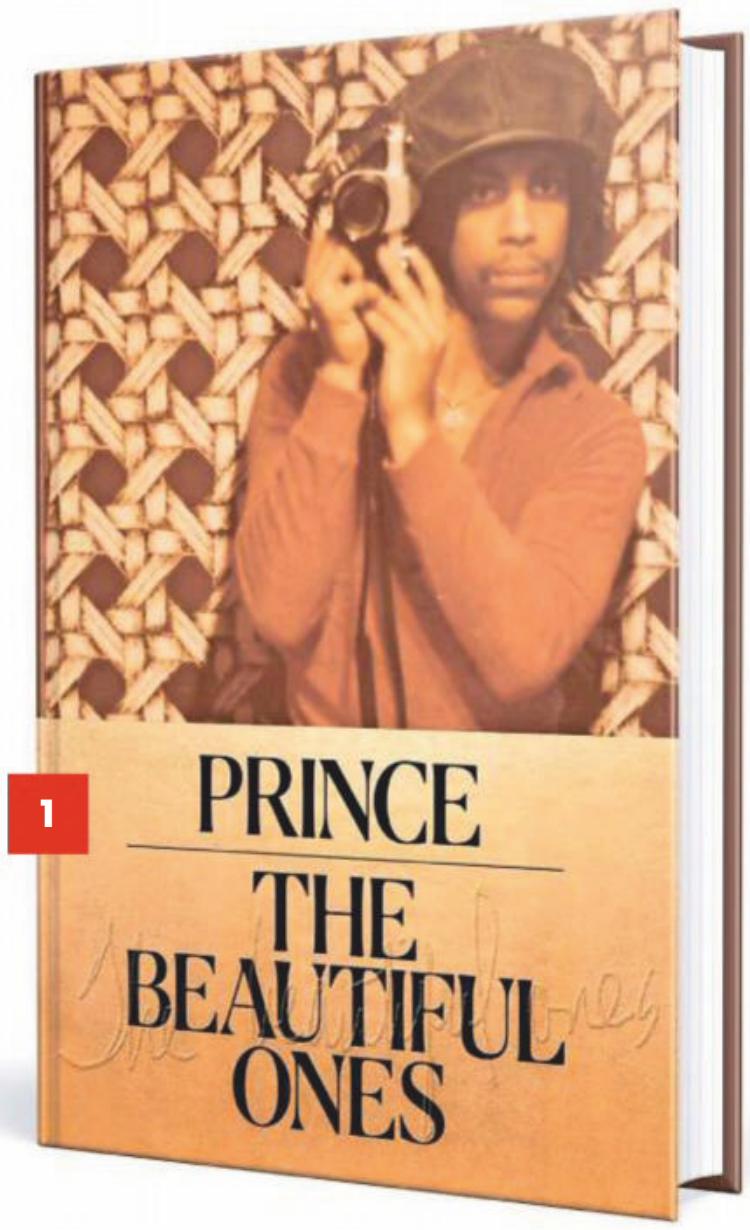
Celebration of a post-punk paradigm-shifter.

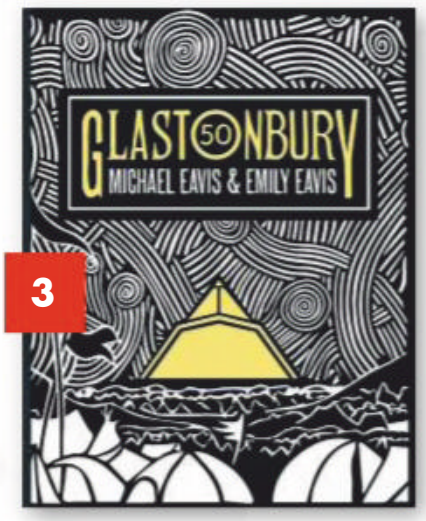
A core text of DIY, women's music history and sheer creative joy, The Raincoats' 1979 debut sounds like it's held together by wire, string and force of will. As this reissue shows, though, its impact was – and remains – powerful. Slipping punk's trad underpinning, No Side To Fall In and You're A Million let their rhythms off the leash, while added single Fairytale In The Supermarket and Off Duty Trip's withering fury still sound like women cutting the guy ropes, elevating themselves into a space of their own. ★★★★ *VICTORIA SEGAL*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
DOWN IN JAMAICA: 40 YEARS OF VP RECORDS
VP RECORDS, OUT NOW

Big box charting the rise of reggae's biggest label.

When Jamaican producer Vincent Chin opened his Randy's record shop and studio on North Parade, Jamaica in 1962, few could have imagined the business growing into reggae's most successful ever imprint. This deluxe, 94-track boxset illustrates the VP label's knack for hit-making, from prime roots cuts by The Congos and Johnny Clarke to dancehall gems from Yellowman and Barrington Levy, while VC's church-bashing 2000 hit By His Deeds is the greatest song VP ever put out. A thrilling joyride through reggae's golden era and beyond. ★★★★ *SIMON McEWEN*





BOOKS

Rupert Howe picks the best music books of the month.

When Prince was discussing ideas for a mould-breaking memoir with co-writer Dan Piepenbring, he remarked that it should be "a handbook for the brilliant community". That vision was only sketched out before his death in 2016, but 1 **The Beautiful Ones** (CENTURY, ★★★★) remains a jewel-like fragment, Piepenbring's sensitive introduction providing a snapshot of the Purple One's last months at Paisley Park and during the Piano & A Microphone tour. Prince's own contribution is fragmentary by comparison: 20-odd pages of florid, handwritten notes about his childhood, plus reproductions of a late-'70s photo album, lyric sheets and an early outline for the movie version of Purple Rain. By turns enlightening and frustrating, like Prince's own life it's hard not to feel there was much more to come.

The Beautiful Ones remains a jewel-like fragment.

Shortage of material wasn't a problem for Q's Tom Doyle when assembling his rollicking oral history of Madness's early years. Charismatic frontman Suggs is a goldmine of quirky anecdotes as 2 **Before We Was We** (VIRGIN BOOKS, ★★★★) opens in scruffy, still bomb-damaged North London, the self-styled Aldenham Glamour Boys wombling round nicking whatever caught their eye. Under the guidance of keyboard player Mike Barson the boisterous street gang eventually coalesced into a band, one that gave punk-infused ska reggae a uniquely British comic twist until, by the time the tale screeches to a halt in 1979, they were poised to make the leap from pub curios to national favourites the Nutty Boys.

Madness didn't perform at Glastonbury until 1986, just before their original line-up disintegrated. Yet it was during this period the Worthy Farm shindig fully transitioned from post-hippy "fayre" to a celebration of popular music in all its forms. Michael Eavis and his daughter Emily prove typically welcoming guides as 3 **Glastonbury 50** (ORION, ★★★★) unravels the history, the book's scrapbook approach mixing personal stories and classic photography with colourful reminiscences from the likes of Chris Martin, Ed Chemical, Noel Gallagher and Banksy. Q

GADGETS

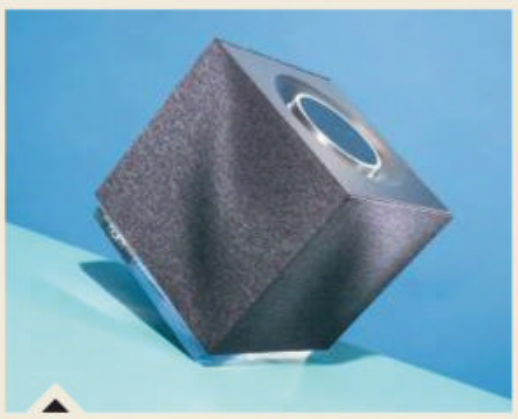
Niall Doherty's gizmos round-up.

AMAZON ECHO STUDIO £189.99

A fine addition to the Amazon takeover of your home, body and soul, this speaker has very good sound and is easy to connect with your choice of streaming service. Of course, it also comes with your old buddy Alexa, more serious than the jaunty Siri and not as stern as Google Assistant. Alexa, remind me of the word-count for this because I keep over-writing and running out of ★★★★

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO MELOMANIA 1 £119

Exactly the sort of superlative earbuds as you'd expect from Cambridge Audio. They take sound so seriously that no-one who works for them is allowed to laugh or smile, not even when they see Gary from accounts accidentally walk into the female toilets. They come with a nifty charging case, are very comfy, and the sound is expansive and clear. A bargain at that price. ★★★★



NAIM MU-SO QB 2ND GENERATION £749

We have thoroughly tested the original Naim Mu-So QB at Q over the past couple of years by nominating it as our office speaker. Its excellent sound has been very comforting to us in difficult times, like when I pocket-dialled the guitarist from IDLES. So are we about to let it gather dust in favour of this 2nd generation upgrade? Yes. This is a stunning speaker, expensive but worth it. ★★★★★

MARCO VITTUR

CHOICE CUTS

THE Q STAFF AND WRITERS' TIPS OF THE MONTH.

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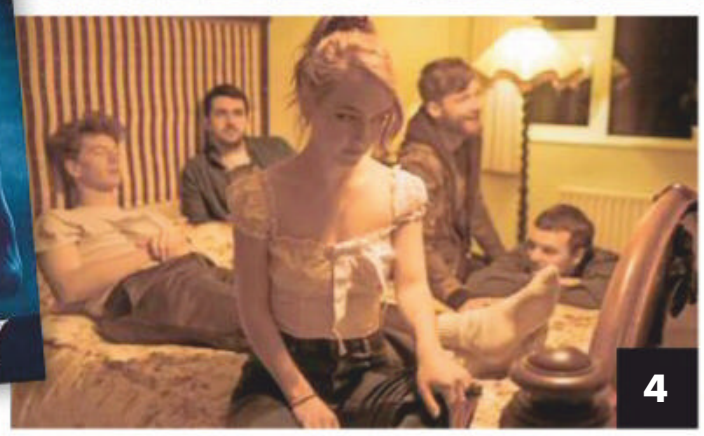

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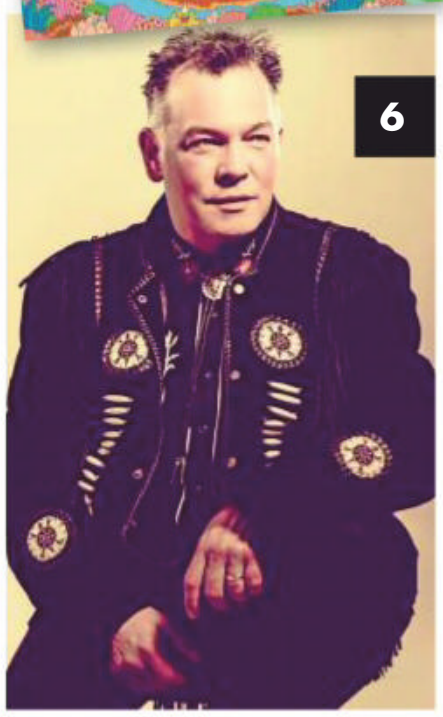


6

LAURA SNAPES
Q WRITER

"I screamed at the brilliant **SUCCESSION** finale and realised that, in its second series, 1 **MOTHERLAND** is the closest thing we've had to a British Seinfeld: absolutely no hugging, nor learning. I finally read Carl Wilson's superb **LET'S TALK ABOUT LOVE**, his journey into what constitutes 'good' taste through the medium of Celine Dion's 1997 album of the same name, and found late-year favourite albums in solo debuts by **CAROLINE POLACHEK** (formerly of Chairlift) and **KIM GORDON**. Watching The Raincoats present Gordon with Q Hero at the awards felt like post-punk Christmas."

MATT ALLEN
Q WRITER

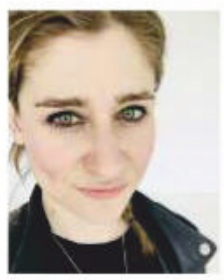
"Winter's arrival has been lifted by the spectral rock of US psych outfit 2 **MOON DUO**. Their latest album, Stars Are The Light, brims with hooky electronica. Soon to be a JJ Abrams-produced HBO series, Matt Ruff's 2016 novel **LOVECRAFT COUNTRY** adds a compelling spin to Get Out-style horror by adding an eerie undertone of malevolent sorcery to 1950s America. Finally, the Showtime documentary **OF MICS AND MEN** is an intimate and exhaustive four-part portrait of the Wu-Tang Clan and features old home videos and lengthy interviews with all remaining members."

NIALL DOHERTY
DEPUTY EDITOR

"I very much enjoyed Tricky's autobiography 3 **HELL IS ROUND THE CORNER**, written with Q's Andrew Perry. I interviewed Tricky recently and he said he'd once been approached about making a film of his life; there's enough in the book for a trilogy. One thing I keep playing over in my mind is an incident involving a service station and sausage and chips that might have diverted the course of British music in the '90s. I am all in for the new **WATCHMEN** series, excellently scripted, wonderfully shot, and containing a sharp-edged soundtrack by Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross."

CHRIS CATCHPOLE
ASSISTANT EDITOR

"I'm barely halfway through it, but I'm completely taken in by Canadian author Michael Ondaatje's 2018 novel **WARLIGHT** at the moment. Its evocative, gas-lit world of semi-criminal post-war London is right up my darkened alley. There's light to be found too in the shadows of appallingly named Irish five-piece 4 **JUST MUSTARD**'s last single, Seven – think Hope Sandoval fronting The Cure at their most gloomy – and the early offerings of marginally better named newcomers **BDRMM**, who pepper their gothy/shoegazing rock with spangled psychedelic wig-outs."



EVE BARLOW
Q WRITER

"Earlier this year, I came across a legacy voice in 5 **DONNA MISSAL**. She put out her debut album, This Time, in 2018: a mix of R&B/rock pop songs, with highlights being the tracks Girl and Keep Lying. Her live reputation far outshone anything else. Now she's back with angsty single You Burned Me and a support slot on Lewis Capaldi's tour. See her. Elsewhere, I'm as obsessed with the new **HAIM** single, Now I'm In It, as I am the first solo album from former Chairlift member **CAROLINE POLACHEK**. Both feature hard, slapping synths encasing the tenderest of emotions."

PAUL STOKES
Q WRITER

" 6 **STEWART LEE**'s ace new stand-up show, Tornado/Snowflake, hits the mark with observations about erroneous Netflix listings about sharks falling from the skies, Phoebe Waller-Bridge 'detoxifying' Bond and whether a cesspit can have a tip (it can't). The British Museum's new **TROY** exhibition is a compelling showpiece of how history and legend collide, while myth-making of a more up-to-date variety comes courtesy of soulful newcomers **OFFWORLD**. The band's male/female joint-vocal tunes are undeniable yet their identity is not, as the group point to paintings found in El Salvador rather than reveal who they are."

GETTY, LAURA MCCLUSKEY

WHAT'S ON Absolute Radio THIS MONTH...

Golden mullet years: David Bowie – writer of The Greatest Song Of The '80s?

Highlights from Q partners Absolute Radio this month include the Greatest Song Of The '80s revealed and the new Coldplay LP showcased...

ABSOLUTE RADIO 10s LAUNCH

Listen again on the Absolute Radio App

As another decade draws to a close, Absolute Radio is launching a new radio station: Absolute Radio 10s, playing music from the years 2010-2019. Absolute Radio is the only place where you can listen to live radio shows with a choice of eight different playlists spanning the decades from the '60s to the noughties. Expect Absolute Radio 10s to play the biggest and best songs from the likes of Biffy Clyro, Rihanna, Ed Sheeran, Florence + The Machine, Catfish And The Bottlemen and many more, alongside such evergreen bangers as Get Lucky, Happy and Uptown Funk. Tune in.

THE GREATEST SONG OF THE '80S

Absolute 80s, until 24 November

It's the last couple of days to cast your vote in Absolute 80s' poll of the greatest songs of the '80s. The countdown will be played in December as part of the celebrations marking 10 years since the UK's first and most successful '80s music station launched. Will Ultravox's 1981 hit Vienna finally beat Joe Dolce's Shaddap You Face, after the latter kept Vienna from the top spot for three weeks? What's the best Madonna song from her imperial era? Who will have the most songs in the Top 100? David Bowie, Whitney Houston, George Michael or Prince? Have your say at Absolute80s.com.

BLINK-182 CO-HOST

Absolute Radio, 24 November, 11pm

Blink-182 bassist Mark Hoppus and guitarist Matt Skiba join Pete Donaldson to co-host an hour of music and conversation on Absolute Radio. The pair will be discussing new album Nine, the 20th anniversary of their classic Enema Of The State album and picking songs they love from the likes of The Cars, AC/DC, Lana Del Rey and The Beatles.

ALBUM OF THE WEEK: COLDPLAY

Absolute Radio, 25 November, 9pm

Danielle Perry will be playing songs from the new Coldplay album, Everyday Life, on the evening show in her Album Of The Week slot. The record is split in two halves, "Sunrise" and "Sunset", and at times reflects a more experimental side to the band, as showcased on the pre-release track Arabesque, which features a saxophone solo by Afrobeat musician Femi Kuti.

TIME TO LISTEN: KT TUNSTALL

Absolute Radio, 9 December, 7pm

KT Tunstall is the next guest in a 12-week series of features called Time To Listen, which launched on World Mental Health Day. Each night on Absolute Radio's evening show, after 7pm, a celebrity opens up about the songs which have helped them in the bad times, and the good times. Hear more choices on the Absolute Radio App.

Absolute Radio THE SUNDAY NIGHT MUSIC CLUB IN ASSOCIATION WITH Q

This month Sunday Night Music Club host Danielle Perry salutes the art of the mixtape.

"I've just listened to the latest instalment of Josh Homme's Desert Sessions series, which landed a few weeks back. A stellar collective of like-minded musical thrill-seekers bunked up at Rancho De La Luna in Joshua Tree to lay down new tracks for this much celebrated heritage mixtape. This time around guests included Mike Kerr (Royal Blood) Jake Shears (Scissor Sisters) Billy Gibbons (ZZ Top) and Carla Azar (Jack White, Autolux etc) among many others.

Listening to it reminded me of the mixtapes I made from school days into my late teens and which I still have. They're much treasured things of beauty – a personal connection through music. From running a small record label from my front room I know there is still a huge attachment to CDs as a format, and a mixtape is entirely possible with that. So let's keep doing them, everyone."

■ *The Sunday Night Music Club starts at 8pm.*

GETTY

GOO GOO DOLLS

FEBRUARY 2020

WED 19 GLASGOW O2 ACADEMY
FRI 21 MANCHESTER ALBERT HALL
SAT 22 LEEDS O2 ACADEMY
MON 24 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
TUE 25 BIRMINGHAM O2 INSTITUTE
THU 27 LONDON ROUNDHOUSE

GIGSANDTOURS.COM | TICKETMASTER.CO.UK | GOOGOODOLLS.COM
THE NEW ALBUM 'MIRACLE PILL' OUT NOW
AN SJM CONCERTS & DFC PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH WME

SJM CONCERTS PRESENTS

PAUL HEATON & JACQUI ABBOTT

ALL TICKETS £30 (PLUS BOOKING & VENUE FEES)

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS

APRIL 2020
SOLD OUT day 16
GLASGOW SEC ARMADILLO
SOLD OUT y
LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA
Saturday 18
NEWCASTLE UTILITA ARENA

SOLD OUT 9
DUNDEE CAIRD HALL
SOLD OUT y 21 & W SOLD OUT ay 22
HULL BONUS ARENA
Friday 24
BIRMINGHAM ARENA
SOLD OUT ay 25
LIVERPOOL M&S BANK ARENA

SOLD OUT y 26
LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
SOLD OUT Sday 29 & Thursday 30 SOLD OUT
LONDON PALLADIUM
MAY 2020
SOLD OUT 1
CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA
SOLD OUT y 02
STOKE VICTORIA HALL

Saturday 4 July 2020 MANCHESTER CASTLEFIELD BOWL

THE NEW ALBUM
'MANCHESTER CALLING' OUT 06 MARCH

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SJM CONCERTS, FUTURESOUNDS, KU PROMOTIONS AND AMG BY ARRANGEMENT WITH PARADIGM PRESENTS

The Pigeon Detectives

MAY 2020

FRI	8	MIDDLESBROUGH	EMPIRE
SAT	9	GLASGOW	QMU
WED	13	LONDON	O2 FORUM KENTISH TOWN
THU	14	BIRMINGHAM	O2 INSTITUTE
FRI	15	MANCHESTER	O2 RITZ
SAT	16	LEEDS	O2 ACADEMY

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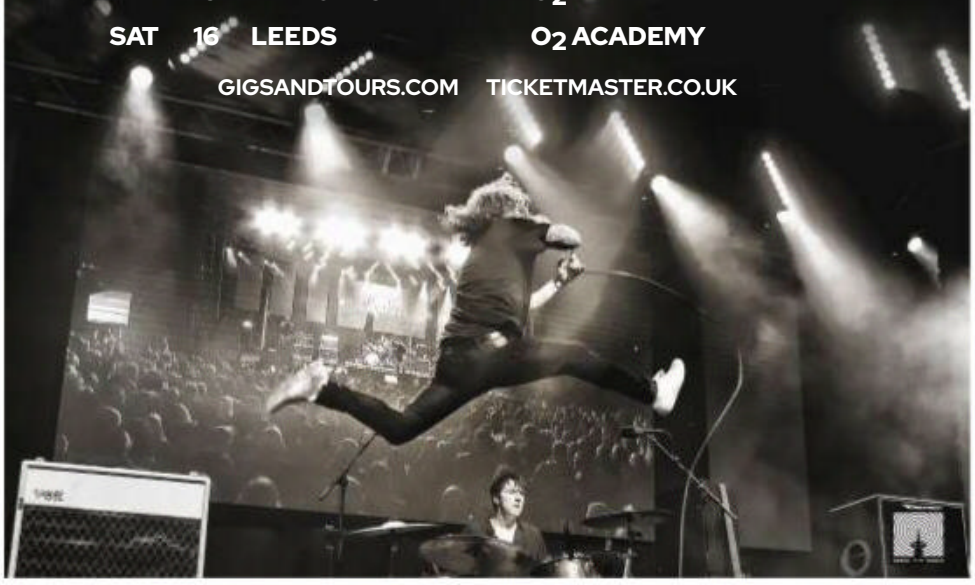

Supergrass

THE STRANGE ONES 1994 - 2008

UK & IRELAND TOUR

FRI	14	FEB	DUBLIN OLYMPIA THEATRE	SOLD OUT
SAT	15	FEB	DUBLIN OLYMPIA THEATRE	SOLD OUT
MON	17	FEB	BELFAST ULSTER HALL	
THU	20	FEB	GLASGOW BARROWLAND BALLROOM	SOLD OUT
FRI	21	FEB	GLASGOW BARROWLAND BALLROOM	SOLD OUT
MON	24	FEB	NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY	
WED	26	FEB	MANCHESTER O2 VICTORIA WAREHOUSE	SOLD OUT
SAT	29	FEB	LEEDS O2 ACADEMY	SOLD OUT
TUE	03	MAR	BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY	SOLD OUT
FRI	06	MAR	LONDON ALEXANDRA PALACE	SOLD OUT

FINAL SHOWS ADDED DUE TO PHENOMENAL DEMAND!

THU	27	FEB	MANCHESTER O2 VICTORIA WAREHOUSE
SUN	01	MAR	LEEDS O2 ACADEMY
WED	04	MAR	BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY
SAT	07	MAR	LONDON ALEXANDRA PALACE

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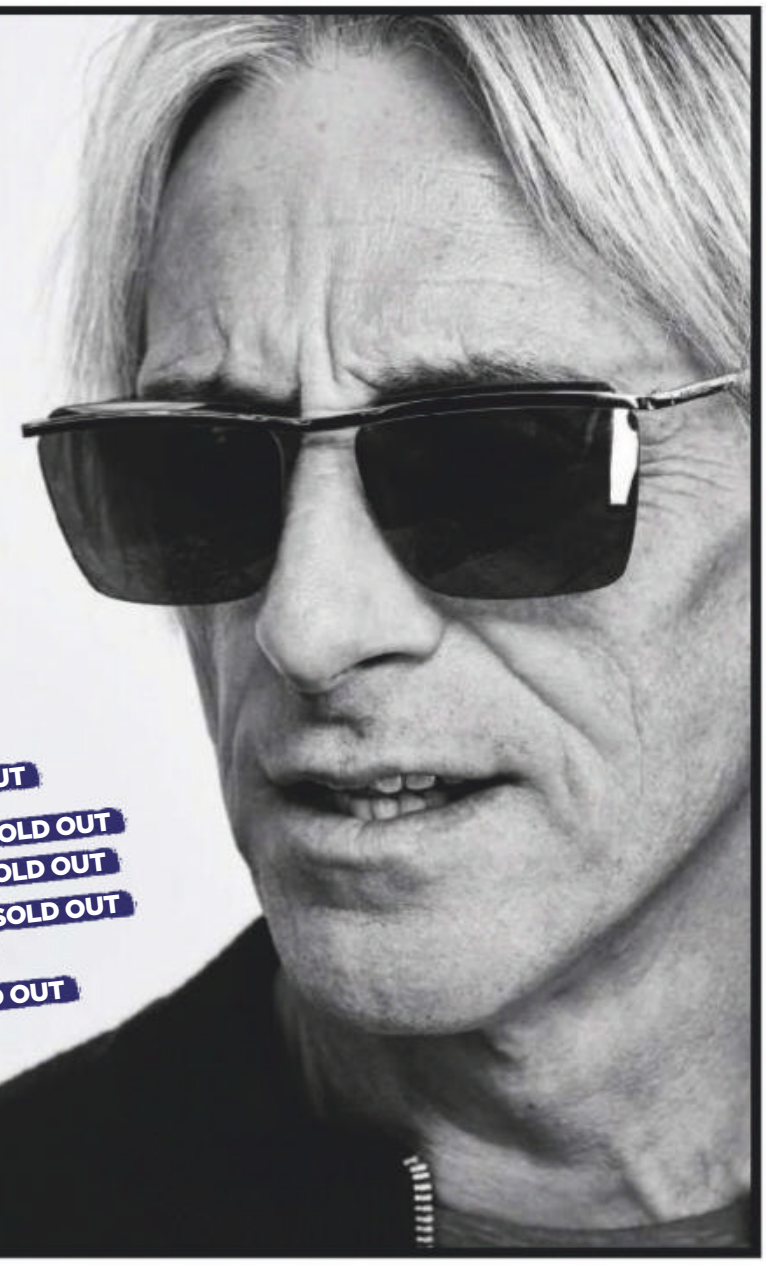

01.05 CAMBRIDGE Corn SOLD OUT
02.05 NORWICH U SOLD OUT
04.05 MARGATE Winte SOLD OUT
05.05 SOUTHEND Cliffs SOLD OUT
06.05 OXFORD New Th SOLD OUT
08.05 ABERDEEN Music SOLD OUT
09.05 GLASGOW Bar SOLD OUT
10.05 MIDDLESBROUGH To SOLD OUT
12.05 LLANDUDNO Venue SOLD OUT
13.05 LIVERPOOL Eventim SOLD OUT
14.05 STOKE Vict SOLD OUT
16.05 PORTSMOUTH Gu SOLD OUT

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22.03.20 Nottingham / Rock City
24.03.20 Bristol / O2 Academy
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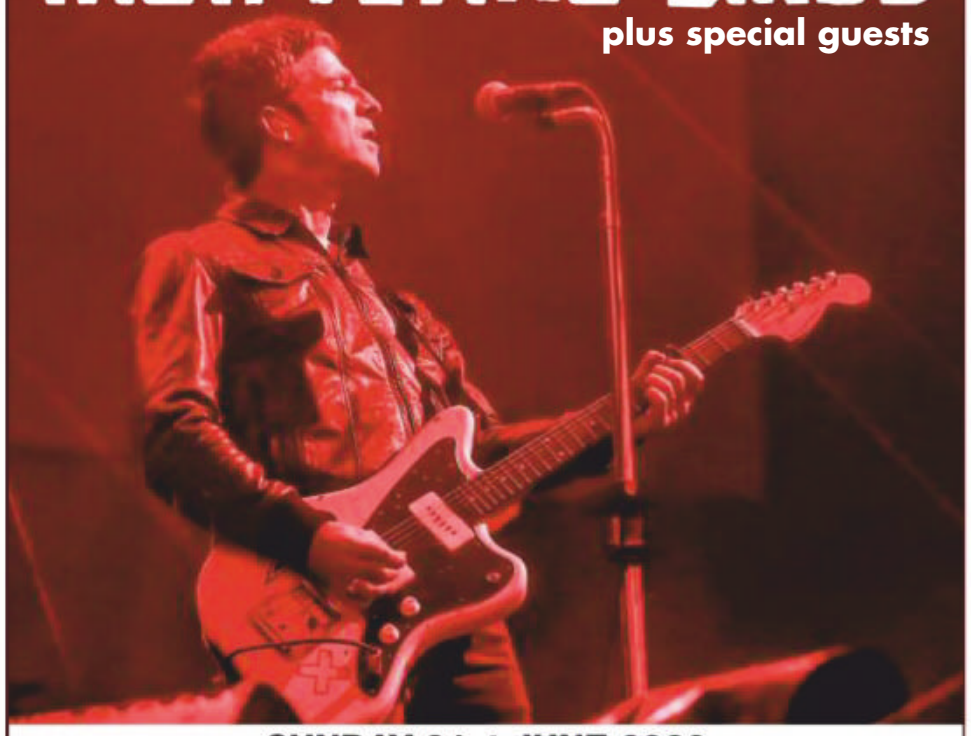

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Sat 8th
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Thurs 6th
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Corn Exchange

Tues 11th
BIRMINGHAM
Town Hall

Tues 4th
BRISTOL
St George's

Wed 12th
LONDON
Alexandra Palace Theatre

Mon 3rd
MANCHESTER
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Fri 14th
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JOE
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THU 06 LEEDS LENDING ROOM
FRI 07 NEWCASTLE UNDERGROUND
SAT 08 BEDFORD ESQUIRES
THU 13 MANCHESTER JIMMY'S
FRI 14 BIRMINGHAM CASTLE & FALCON
SAT 15 BRISTOL LOUISIANA
THU 27 BRIGHTON HOPE & RUIN
FRI 28 LONDON DINGWALLS
SAT 29 BOURNEMOUTH THE ANVIL
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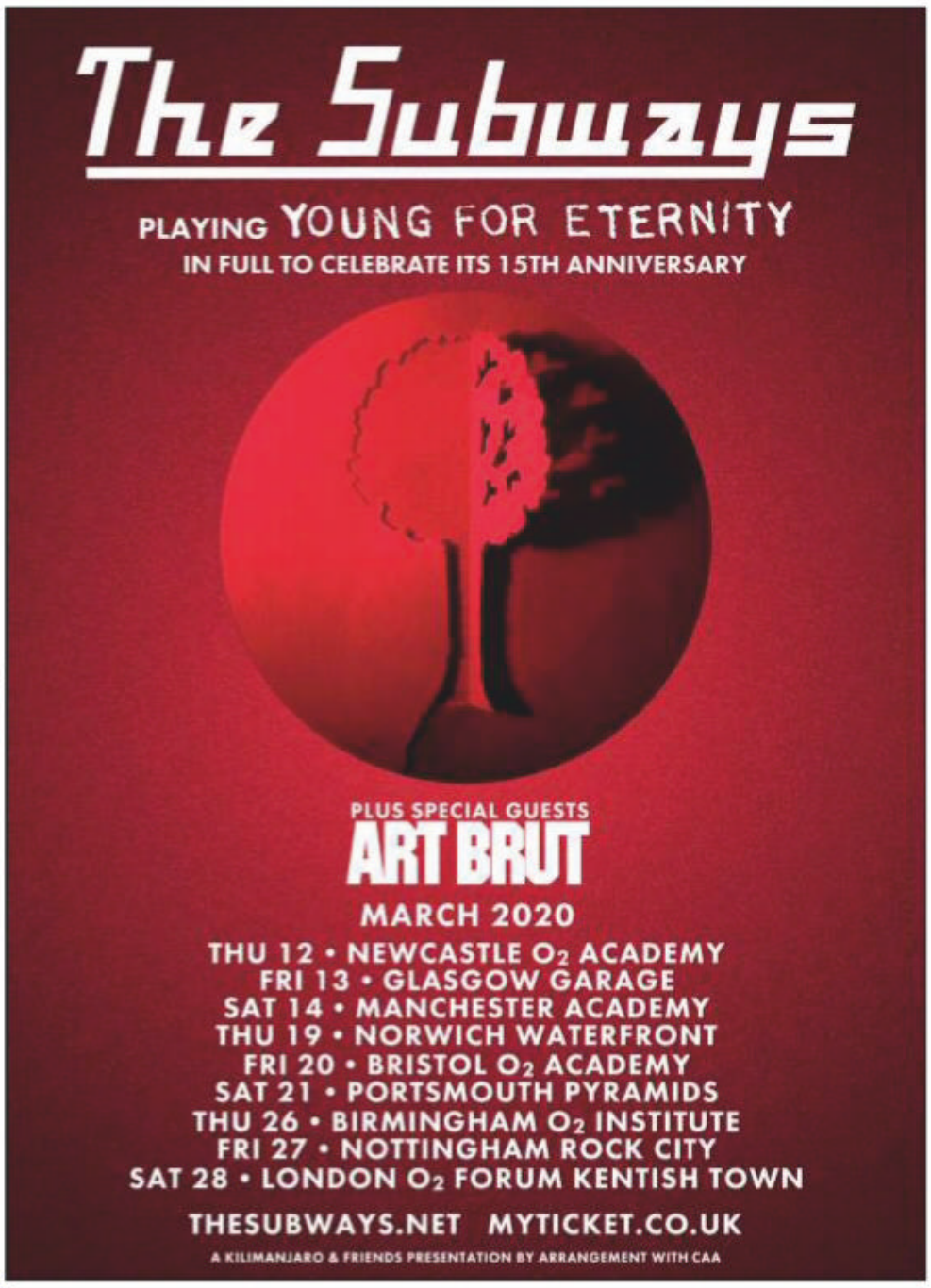
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SAT 14 • MANCHESTER ACADEMY
THU 19 • NORWICH WATERFRONT
FRI 20 • BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY
SAT 21 • PORTSMOUTH PYRAMIDS
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NEW SHOWS ANNOUNCED
APRIL 2020
WED 29 DUBLIN CONVENTION CENTRE
MAY 2020
FRI 01 YORK BARBICAN
SAT 02 LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
MON 04 SOUTHAMPTON MAYFLOWER
TUE 05 CARDIFF ST DAVID'S HALL
THU 07 LONDON ROYAL ALBERT HALL
FRI 08 LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC
SAT 09 SHEFFIELD CITY HALL
MON 11 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
TUE 12 BATH FORUM
THU 14 GATESHEAD SAGE
FRI 15 MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO
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SOLD OUT IESDAY 07 HULL BONUS ARENA
FRIDAY 09 GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO
SATURDAY 10 LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA
SUNDAY 11 LIVERPOOL M&S BANK ARENA
TUESDAY 13 DUBLIN 3ARENA
FRIDAY 16 BIRMINGHAM RESORTS WORLD ARENA
SATURDAY 17 MANCHESTER ARENA
SUNDAY 18 NOTTINGHAM MOTORPOINT ARENA
TUESDAY 20 CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA
SOLD OUT IESDAY 21 BRIGHTON CENTRE
SOLD OUT Y 23 BOURNEMOUTH INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
SATURDAY 24 LONDON THE O2
SUNDAY 25 LONDON THE O2
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New Album BLUE EYED SOUL out 8th November
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1968-2020

SUN 2nd FEB 2020
LONDON O_2 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE

TUE 4th FEB 2020
LEICESTER O_2 ACADEMY

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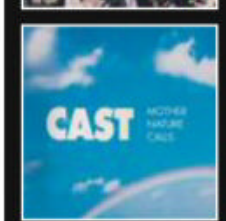
AN ACADEMY EVENTS PRESENTATION
IN ASSOCIATION WITH RHINO AGENCY

THU 19 DEC
ALL CHANGE
PLUS GUESTS
STONE
THE VETS



FRI 20 DEC
MOTHER NATURE CALLS
PLUS GUESTS
THE K'S
STEVE PILGRIM

SAT 21 DEC
MAGIC HOUR
PLUS GUESTS
JAMIE WEBSTER
STEVE PILGRIM

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2020

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LONDON O_2 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE

TUE 5th MAY
BRISTOL O_2 ACADEMY

WED 6th MAY
NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY

THU 7th MAY
MANCHESTER O_2 RITZ

FRI 8th MAY
GLASGOW BARROWLAND BALLROOM

SAT 9th MAY
LEEDS O_2 ACADEMY

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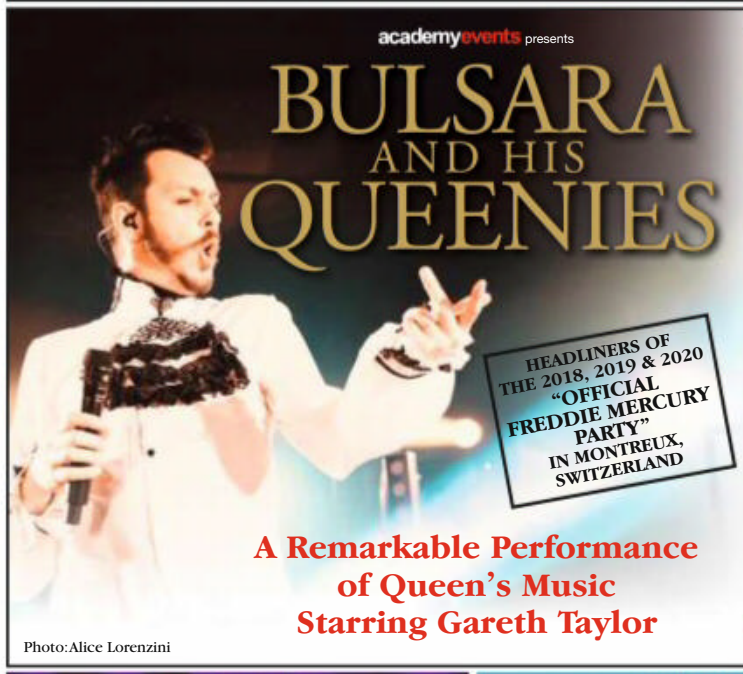
BULSARA AND HIS QUEENIES



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A Remarkable Performance
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Photo:Alice Lorenzini

NATIONAL TOUR 2020

SAT 29 FEB
LIVERPOOL
O_2 ACADEMY2

SAT 07 MAR
BIRMINGHAM
O_2 ACADEMY3

SAT 14 MAR
SHEFFIELD
O_2 ACADEMY2

SAT 21 MAR
LONDON
O_2 ACADEMY2
ISLINGTON

THU 26 MAR
LEEDS
O_2 ACADEMY

FRI 27 MAR
NEWCASTLE
O_2 ACADEMY2

SAT 04 APR
OXFORD
O_2 ACADEMY2

---

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ELECTRIC SIX

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS

MON 25 NOV
LEICESTER
O_2 ACADEMY2

TUE 26 NOV
BIRMINGHAM
O_2 ACADEMY2

WED 27 NOV
OXFORD
O_2 ACADEMY2

THU 28 NOV
BRISTOL
O_2 ACADEMY

SAT 30 NOV
LONDON
O_2 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS
THE LOUNGE Kittens

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ENDORPHINMACHINE
PARTY LIKE IT'S 1999

NATIONAL TOUR 2019-20

FRI 22 NOVEMBER
SHEFFIELD O_2 ACADEMY2

FRI 29 NOVEMBER
BIRMINGHAM O_2 ACADEMY3

SAT 7 DECEMBER
LIVERPOOL O_2 ACADEMY2

SAT 14 DECEMBER
LONDON
O_2 ACADEMY2 ISLINGTON

SAT 15 FEBRUARY
NEWCASTLE O_2 ACADEMY2

---

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The Smyths

"HATFUL OF HOLLOW"

35TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR

FRI 6 DEC BIRMINGHAM O_2 ACADEMY2
FRI 13 DEC SHEFFIELD O_2 ACADEMY2
THU 19 DEC NEWCASTLE O_2 ACADEMY
FRI 20 DEC GLASGOW GARAGE

---

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DEFINITELY MAYBE 25th ANNIVERSARY

To celebrate, the band will be playing the classic album in it's entirety plus their biggest hits & best known recordings

Definitely Maybe

The definitive tribute to oasis

NOVEMBER
SAT 16 LONDON O_2 Academy2 Islington
SAT 23 LEICESTER O_2 Academy2
FRI 29 BOURNEMOUTH O_2 Academy
SAT 30 OXFORD O_2 Academy2

DECEMBER
SAT 14 SHEFFIELD O_2 Academy2
FRI 20 NEWCASTLE O_2 Academy
SUN 22 MANCHESTER O_2 Ritz

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Letter Of The Month

Punk's Not Dead

Dear Q, Genuinely my heart sang when I saw a whole six pages straight on Irish band Fontaines D.C. I bought Dogrel on vinyl a few weeks after release when I discovered the band and I must admit they are the first group that keep me safely sure that punk is indeed NOT dead. I also forked out £19.99 for a T-shirt from their official store because, man, those guys deserve it. Not going to lie, I was wondering where they got their name from as I could not find any information anywhere on it but thanks to you lovely people at Q I now know (Q405: page 86)! Along with their LP, T-shirt and the fan-boy moment of them replying to my Instagram comment, I really hope to see the lads live someday soon. Keep up the good work, Q magazine, and the more Fontaines the better!

Daniel Thomson, Elgin

The (punk) Irish rovers: Fontaines D.C. in last month's issue.

The Name Game

Dear Q, In all the years I've subscribed to Q magazine, I don't ever remember a regular feature that explained the origins of bands' names. There was Where Are They Now? and you've geographically located pictures on album covers but, for some reason, I'd find it interesting to know where bands get their names from. Some are perhaps common knowledge – The Beatles and The Rolling Stones for example – and for the sake of decency you could leave out 10CC and White Snake. You could even call the feature What's In A Name?. There, I've done the work for you! Best regards.

Russell Townsend, Great Waltham

Q COMPETITION

Win! A day out brewing Sadler's Peaky Blinder Craft Lager plus free beer!

Q has teamed up with the good people at Sadler's to offer one reader (plus friend) the chance to win a day jam-packed with everything you need to know about how to master the art of brewing craft ale. What's more, you'll get a six-pack of beer to take home too!

This day out at Sadler's Brewing Co, a sixth-generation family-run business based in Birmingham, marks a celebration of the football fans' beer of choice, Sadler's Peaky Blinder Craft Lager, which is now available in new 330ml cans (see right), each featuring real-life members of the Peaky Blinders gang.

The winner and friend will enjoy a full day learning everything about the brewing and fermentation process, which will include meeting Sadler's brewers and finding out how best to mash, taste and pitch the beer. See below for Terms and Conditions. For more information about Sadler's Brewing Co, visit **www.Sadlersales.co.uk**

This month's teaser:
What year did the Q Awards begin?
Send your answer (one per person), including your address, to **captioncomp@qthemusic.com** or on a postcard to the above address. Competition closes: **6 December 2019.**

Q404 winner:
Congratulations to Johanna Bray, Clevedon, who wins a Pure Elan IR3 radio.

Ts&Cs: The winner must be over the age of 25 and no cash equivalent or alternative prize will be given. The prize is non-transferable and non-exchangeable. Entries received after the closing date of 6 December 2019 will not be considered. Tickets for the brewing experience must be redeemed before April 2020. The experience will begin at 9am at Sadler's brewery at 2, Conyers Trading Estate, Station Drive, Stourbridge DY9 8ER. The experience will end at 4.30pm. The prize package excludes travel and accommodation. Winners must bring old clothes suitable for being covered in a few hops and a good pair of wellington boots or old trainers. To win, email your answer to: captioncomp@Qthemusic.com or post to the usual Q address before 6/12/19. One winner will be chosen by the panel. The winner will be notified, by email, 7-10 days after the closing date and must respond to Q within 14 days or another winner may be chosen. Q will not respond to questions about its chosen winners but will provide winners' names and the home towns, provided a request is made to the usual Q address and accompanied with a SAE. One entry per person and you must be over 25 and live in the UK. Prize is non-negotiable with no cash alternative. Personal data will be collected by Q and passed to prize provider to process entries. See http://www.bauerdatapromise.co.uk for more details. Ts&Cs apply, see www.bauerlegal.co.uk/competition-terms.html. Any queries, email: QMail@Qthemusic.com

The World of Q

Meet the world's best-travelled magazine!

1. Adrian Coyle, Mont Blanc, Chamonix

2. Nicholas Poynter, Galaxy's Edge, Disney's Hollywood Studios, Florida

3. Challenge Central Cycle Team, Adriatic Coast, Croatia

4. Dave Charlton, Princess Diana Beach, Cocoa Point, Barbuda

Reviews Reviewed?

As a subscriber since your first issue, I've always valued your Q Review section and found that it has guided me towards some fantastic music. But in recent times, I've found that nearly all of your reviews seem to score an album as three or four stars, meaning that it is very hard to know what is worth taking the time to listen to and what to ignore. Have you thought about making your reviews out of 10 or 100 (or 11!?) to give you more latitude?

Nicholas Kirk, via Q Mail

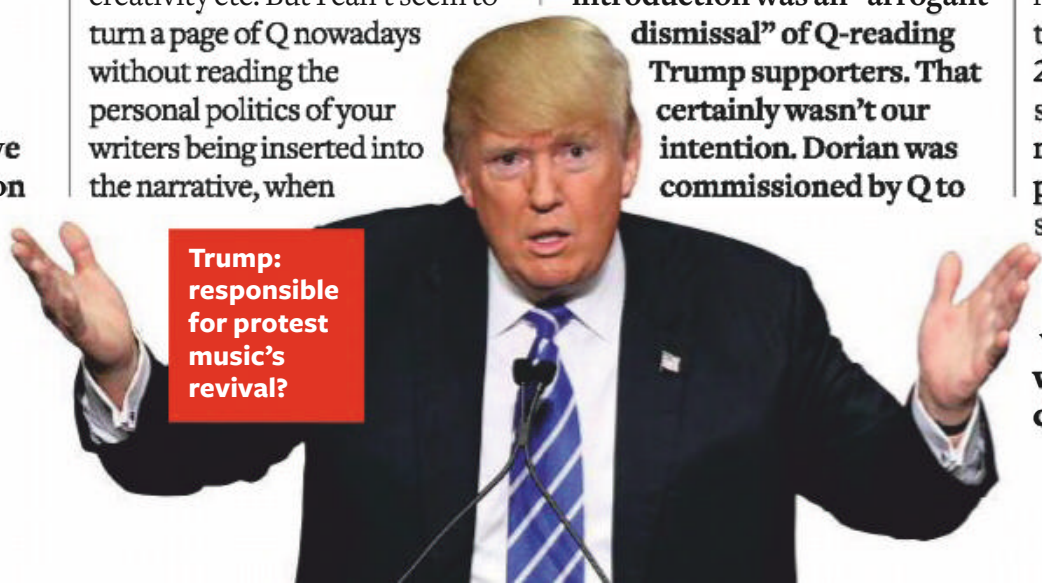
Thanks for your letter, Nicholas. Currently there is more music than ever available for music fans so we feel that our Q Review section should be championing the albums that you, the readers, might want to hear rather than including albums that don't quite make the grade.

Never Mind The Politics

I have been a reader of Q since long before this decade that is celebrated in the most recent issue *[Q405]*. I've read through several social upheavals and I don't recall ever feeling so frustrated with your writers as I have for the last three years. Enough with the constant reference to Donald Trump and Brexit already! If these "disasters" as your reviewers seem to see them are referred to by the artist whom you are interviewing, then fine – whatever fuels the fires of creativity etc. But I can't seem to turn a page of Q nowadays without reading the personal politics of your writers being inserted into the narrative, when often it's tenuous at best, and it's not coming from the mouth of the artist that I want to read about. "The hideous triumph of Donald Trump" as Dorian Lynskey puts it, for instance. Some of your readers voted for Trump and Brexit, in fact the majority of the voters did in both cases so please stop with the arrogant dismissal of those people who also enjoy Q. It's boring and depressing and we all need a break from that.

Andy Johnson, via Q Mail

Andy, sorry you thought our Songs Of The Decade introduction was an "arrogant dismissal" of Q-reading Trump supporters. That certainly wasn't our intention. Dorian was commissioned by Q to preview our run-down of 2010s' defining songs and he simply pointed out that one small consolation from the world's current chaotic political state, which arguably (depending on your viewpoint, of course) was exacerbated by Donald Trump's election win in 2016, is the revival of protest music. Surely that's anything but "boring and depressing"?



Trump: responsible for protest music's revival?

GETTY

Q405 Spine Message

As the world's biggest Lana Del Rey fan, I think I've got this month's spine message. "Eve" is the character Lana plays in the 2013 short film Tropico, which she also wrote and made the music for. If I'm right, can I please get a ticket for her 02 show next February?

Jess Higginbottom, Manchester

Correct, Jess. Unfortunately we can't stretch to a ticket, but we can give you our heartfelt congratulations instead.

“They put a dog’s bib on me...”

Serge Pizzorno

The Kasabian leader on spewing, lizard impersonations and bad haircuts.

Kasabian’s Serge Pizzorno: don’t trust him with your lunch box.

What was the last song you heard which you wished you’d written?
Wow, shit. I mean it happens quite a lot because there’s some fucking tunes out there right now. Probably Mac Miller’s Come Back To Earth, which is just a phenomenal piece of work. It feels so of the moment.

What’s the last film you didn’t bother seeing to the end?
That film Yesterday. I thought, “Danny Boyle and The Beatles, it’s gotta be something, right?” I reckon I lasted fucking five minutes! Obviously Danny Boyle is hugely talented and you’re talking about the best songs ever written, but how did they manage that? Oh man, I don’t want to go deep on it but it was like, “Woah! Let’s just pretend that never happened!”

When did you last have a haircut that you regretted?
About 15 years ago I went in for a Brian Jones and came out with a Victoria Wood! Oh mate. I got in the cab and I had this terrible wave of anxiety, so I got home and just whipped it all off myself. Have you seen the film 28 Days Later? Isn’t that Danny Boyle too? So let’s give him some praise – great film! So I based my haircut after this atrocity on Cillian Murphy’s character in that because he kind of shaved into the side of his head. Looked alright.

When was the last time you put one in the top corner?
Probably 10 minutes ago. I’m always finding the top corner, mate! Officially, last night, my boy plays football when he gets home from school and we shoot goals in the back garden.

When did you last get stopped in the street?
I get it on a daily basis but that’s cool because it’s not down to a fame thing but more a love of music and what you do. One of the best ones was when I was walking in London with my wife and these two lads walked by and one of them tapped the other’s shoulder and I heard him say, “That c**t thinks he’s Serge.” Haha. Me and my wife were like, “What the fuck!?”

When did you last get told off?
When I’m making a record I sort of go off, I don’t communicate very well, I’m just gone. So some days Amy, my beautiful wife, gives me *reminders*. Nothing too severe. But I miss birthdays, I put the wrong lunch boxes in the school bags... I’m that guy!

When was the last time you cried with laughter?
When I’m hanging with my boy, Noel Fielding. When he comes to stay I laugh so much it hurts, like I can’t breathe, it reminds me of being a kid. It was specifically about this thing – now this isn’t going to make much sense – where there’s this Northern Irish geezer who’s got a pet lizard which goes out and gets up to shenanigans and we do the voices, bouncing off each other... that made me cry.

When did you last go out on the lash with Tom *[Meighan, Kasabian singer]*?
Shit, quite a while ago. Probably last Christmas. When we’re not on tour we don’t tend to go on mad ones, that all gets swallowed up in the two years of touring. So when we’re off tour we just tend to hang out, it’s more like a chilled one with each other.

When did you last get fall-over drunk?
You know what, I’m pretty steady on my feet. I get drunk quick, but I can maintain it. After two pints I’m as drunk as I am after four bottles of whisky. So you’re going back some years, man, since I’ve fallen. Actually, I just remembered, do you know The Supervet *[Channel 4’s Dr Noel Fitzpatrick]*? I went to his birthday party a couple of years ago and I got drunk there, mate, really spewing. They got me in a cab somehow and had to get me like a bib, you know those collars they put round dogs’ necks? It was bad news, man.

You’re 40 next year. When did you last reassure yourself that life begins at 40?
That’s never really been a thing for me. I don’t mind ageing. I’m looking forward to it! Will there be a big party? Yeah, I’ve got my eye on hiring this oil rig out in the sea. I’m having that – you get there by helicopter, out in the middle of nowhere, and have a party for three days. Job done.

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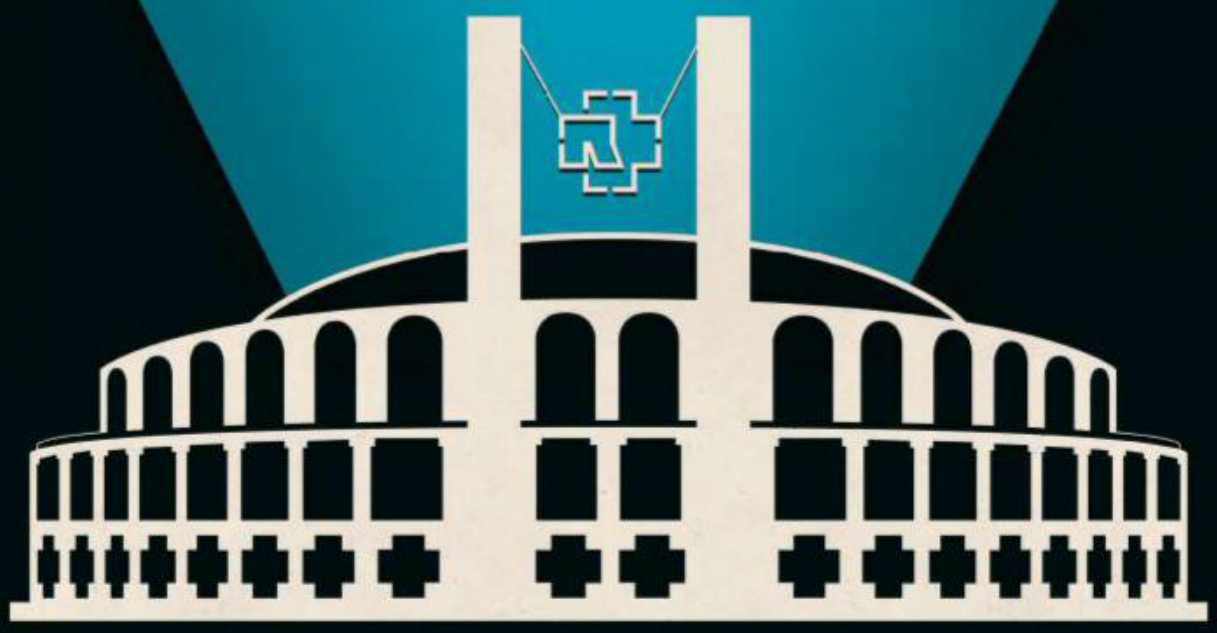

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